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SUMMARY of Thesis presented by Henry Hutchison, M.A., B.D. (Edin.)

as a result of Research in the Faculty of Divinity :

**Subject: "Martin Luther's Doctrine of Prayer" - submitted March, 1955,
for the Doctorate in Philosophy of Glasgow University.**

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The Thesis proceeds on the assumption that Luther's Doctrine of Prayer is central to his theology, and a convenient key to the essentials of his whole theological outlook. In PART I (PRELIMINARY), certain broad theological categories are examined, which the writer claims as necessary 'Pre-suppositions of Prayer', in Luther's view; viz. the primacy of the religious relationship, the 'Word of Promise', Faith, 'Justification', and the principle of 'Gloria Dei'.

PART II is concerned with an examination of Luther's Doctrine of Prayer in relation to certain other prominent doctrines, as these are expounded by Luther. Chapter II shows the connection between Prayer and the 'Word' - this term being considered (for convenience) under three distinct headings: Christ the Word (the primary meaning), the Written Word (Scripture), and the Spoken Word (Preaching). Prayer is objectively grounded in this 'Word'.

Chapter III considers Prayer in relation to Luther's notion of the Holy Spirit, the broad conclusion reached being that prayer 'in Christ' (the 'Word') is substantially the same as prayer 'in the Spirit', and that "without the Holy Spirit, no prayer can be made". In this, as in all chapters, careful comparisons are made between the pre-Reformation view and that of Luther.

The complex relationship between Prayer and the Sacraments is then considered, it being noted that, for Luther, there is an intimate connection between them, since both Prayer and the Sacraments are 'forms' in which God presents Himself to human experience. The place of Word and Sacrament, the place of Faith, and the Religious Significance of the Sacraments, are all considered with dual reference to Prayer and Sacrament; and the chapter concludes with a study of the liturgical relationships which obtain between the two. The general conclusion reached is that, in Luther, there is a striking emphasis upon the place of prayers in celebrating the Sacraments, and that the external parts of the rite are, in comparison, of relatively small importance.

Chapter V offers a survey and assessment of Luther's doctrine of prayer in relation to his distinctive conception of the Church. Prayer is not only one of the chief 'marks' of the Church; it is also an activity which cannot genuinely be affected apart from the Church (i.e. the 'whole company of believers'). Personal faith in the Word must be linked to the faith of the Church; personal prayer must be linked to the prayer of the Church. After showing the complementary nature of 'private' and 'public' prayer, the Thesis proceeds to outline one of Luther's most important emphases - the Centrality of the Congregation, in its bearing upon a rightly conceived theology of prayer.

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The final division of the work - PART III - is concerned to locate and assess the importance of the various types of prayer to be found in Luther's own practice of prayer, viz. Thanksgiving, Confession, Petition, and Intercession - this latter including (for the sake of completeness) his attitude to Prayer for the Dead. All these 'types' (with the exception of Prayer for the Dead, of which Luther offers a severe 'critique') find their common justification in the fact that they express man's homage to God, which Luther regards as the basic religious necessity.

A short CONCLUSION is concerned not so much to summarise the whole work as to emphasise the fact that this fundamentally religious interpretation of theological categories is Luther's greatest service to theology.

MARTIN LUTHER'S
DOCTRINE OF
PRAYER.

by the Reverend Henry Hutchison, M.A., B.D.

(Submitted for the Doctorate in Philosophy
of the University of Glasgow, March, 1955.)

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P R E F A C E.

There is no 'systematic presentation' of a 'Doctrine of Prayer' in Luther's writings. Indeed, such a presentation is absent as far as most other of his doctrines are concerned. Hence, the following study necessarily depends, in the first instance, upon the innumerable 'isolated' references to Prayer in Luther's works; and, in the second instance, upon the personal conclusions which the writer has formed as a result of a more general examination of his distinctive theology. The Thesis is based, in particular, upon the writer's conviction that Luther's attitude to Prayer best focuses, and serves as a key to, the various fundamental issues of his theological outlook.

By far the most important source of information is Luther's own material. The several Editions of his works which have been consulted as exhaustively as their bulk allows, together with translations of some of his writings, are indicated in the 'List of Books Consulted', which will be found in the Appendix. The not inconsiderable debt to other writers on Luther is acknowledged in Part II of that Appendix, and more specifically in the text itself. After much consideration, it was deemed the most convenient form of reference to incorporate (often in abbreviated fashion) the various references in the text, rather than to use footnotes or to gather them together in another Appendix; and it is hoped that this method will not in any way interrupt the reading of the subject-matter. The advantages of this method may be found to outweigh the disadvantages.

In putting forward a claim to those portions of the work which are 'original' (as is required), it is perhaps difficult to avoid either of the two possible extremes. However, in the first place, it can be submitted that the scope of the present Thesis has not been attempted in any other work known to the writer. There are many books on Luther's general Theology (and these have been gratefully consulted), but there is no book which attempts an exhaustive outline and assessment of Luther's Doctrine of Prayer. Further: originality is claimed for the whole method of approach, viz. the suggestion (substantiated in the text) that Luther's attitude to prayer provides the best key to his wider theological 'scheme', as well as illustrating in the clearest possible way, the fundamental concepts of his thought.

The attempt to show the unity of Luther's Theology (in Part II) by demonstrating the intimate connection between Prayer and the various doctrines expounded in that section, is also claimed as new. This is particularly the case in the writer's treatment of the relationship between Prayer and the Sacraments. In the discovery of the 'right order of prayer' (according to Luther), and in the re-constructing of a 'systematic theology' which lies behind the Types of Prayer discussed in Part III, it may be accepted that there is another personal contribution on the part of the present writer. A consideration of the four Types (Thanksgiving, Confession, Petition, and Intercession) illustrates his conviction that, in Luther, 'religion' and 'theology' cannot be separated. In a word: Luther's theology is shown to be 'dynamic' rather than 'dogmatic'; it depends for its expression and its efficacy upon the "one ultimate issue of the religious relationship". This is why Prayer has such relevance to that Theology.

(March, 1955)

H.H.

PART I.PRELIMINARY.Chapter I. SOME THEOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS OF PRAYER.(1) Introduction.

It has been rightly claimed that , "For Luther , every question must be examined in the light of its relevance to the one ultimate issue of the religious relationship". (P.Watson. 'Let God Be God'. p. 26.) Of no question could this be truer than that of prayer's essential basis and nature. It will be axiomatic for this study that Luther regards prayer as being "rooted in the primordial religious awareness of God as personal". (H.H. Farmer. 'The World & God'. p. 128.)

Luther's religion is greatly misrepresented if it is regarded as being principally a set of doctrines ; or if it is treated exclusively in terms of 'theological theory'. For him it was an 'existential relationship' (though he does not use this modern term). He regarded religion as a relationship consisting of two intensely personal 'factors' , God and man. This meant that all aspects of religion might have the mark of theocentricity or egocentricity - depending upon which factor of the religious relationship was considered to be primary. Luther's own religious experience is partly the record of his discarding the latter and adopting the former.

It may be fairly stated that Luther began with an egocentric (or 'anthropocentric') conception of religion. In this , he was a child of his age. This is not to say that theocentric elements in mediaeval Romanism were completely absent ; but it remains true that the dominant note was anthropocentric. "Religion , as Luther found it in Mediaeval Catholicism , was of an essentially egocentric character . . . His significance in the history of religion is that in him the theocentric tendency fully and unequivocally asserted , or rather , re-asserted itself". (P.Watson. op.cit. p. 37.)

In Luther's reforming conception , God (not man) occupies the centre of the religious stage. This means that fellowship with God does not depend on man's achievement ; it means that God is not conceived in terms of the answer to human problems and needs ; it means that God cannot be regarded as the One from whom man expects either the accomplishment of his desires , or the reward of his deserts. It also means that prayer cannot be regarded as one of several ways of 'coming to God'.

Any surprise that one might feel in reading Hermann's observation , "Luther by no means recommends prayer as the chief means whereby we are to come to God" , may well spring from an unconscious adherence to the view (held by most of Luther's contemporaries) that prayer is basically a powerful 'instrument' put into the hands of man for the securing of his desires. ('Communion of the Christian with God'. p. 336.) This was certainly not Luther's view.

No doubt (as we shall note in Chap. VIII) the expression of these desires is most prominent in Luther , and the generally 'primitive' approach of Romanism is often suggested in his own statements regarding the function of prayer. Yet , ultimately , he repudiates the belief that human need is the basis of religion. This conception is an utter misrepres-

entation of Luther's religion. There is not only something very uncertain about religion construed in terms of human need, but something distinctly false as well. Yet it was the commonly held view of Luther's contemporaries. Mediaeval theology and (what was worse) Mediaeval piety took it for granted that religion is grounded in human need. Their fundamental assumption that human 'desire and desert' remained the essential ground of religion was rarely called in question.

Consequently the Mediaeval view of prayer was not called in question either - except for those comparatively few who had come to feel desperately dissatisfied with the Church. But not until Luther's 'protest' did this whole question become a vital issue. He first saw clearly that Prayer may be regarded in two ways: either the means by which personal benefits (otherwise outside of his reach) could be obtained by man; or the expression of his utter dependence for all he is and has on God alone. A doctrine of prayer, in other words, may be anthropocentric or theocentric.

Luther's mature doctrine of prayer was of course thoroughly theocentric. He saw that, if prayer was not to be merely a cry for help, but a living communion with God, then it must have a direct relation to the fact that God turns towards men in the first place. It must realise that God is in a perpetual 'state' of being turned towards men. Hence the reason for the sub-heading in Hermann's book: "Turning to God is Wrongly Supposed to Begin in Prayer". (op.cit. p.202.) Or, as Luther himself declares: "Before thou callest upon God or seekest Him, God must have come to thee and found thee". (Erlangen. x.11.)

In other words, supplication is never the first fact in the Christian's turning towards God. The prayer which is wrung from the heart in trouble, hoping merely that God will 'break the chain of causes and effects', is not true Christian prayer. The person uttering such a prayer could not be held to be 'in the presence of God'; and therefore such a prayer would not be communion with God. "The sum of true religion", Luther says, "is to hear the Lord when He speaketh unto us, and to invoke and praise His holy name". (Comm. on Psalms of Degrees. p.59.)

Horkmann might easily have been summarising Luther's view when he says: "The Christian grasps God because God has grasped him, and it is only in prayer breathed out of this experience that the Christian can be certain that God hears him and answers the cry of his soul". (op. cit. p. 203.) Probably one of the finest of many declarations on this point by Luther is in his remarks on Psalm 13 (verse iii). "We do not pray to be considered previous to God's considering us; but what we want is to be enabled to feel that God does consider us, by enjoying the peace and confidence of it in our hearts. It is God's first considering us and having respect unto us by His grace, that causes us to pray that He would have respect unto us, and hear us". (Select Works. Vol.4. p.36f).

Luther never tires of proclaiming the primacy of the divine factor in the religious relationship. Fellowship between God and man must always rest upon what God has done, not upon what man has done. "For God wills to save us not by . . . that which comes and springs from us,

but by that which comes from elsewhere into us ; not by that which originates in our earth , but by that which comes down from heaven". ('Lectures on Romans' : qu. by P. Watson , op.cit. p. 39.) For Luther , it is only that which 'comes from elsewhere' , or 'comes down from heaven' , which has the power of creating in man the spiritual conditions in which he can genuinely turn to God in prayer. Unless the divine-human relationship is right , no aspect of Christian piety - not least , prayer - can be right.

Hence , Luther can say : "This is to know God aright , when He is understood of us not under the name of power or wisdom (which is a terror unto us) , but under the name of goodness and love". (Gal. E.T. 274. iv. 8f.) What he means here - as has been pointed out - is simply that , if we construe the will of God in terms either of legal justice or of arbitrary power rather than of giving and forgiving love , then we misconstrue it , and stand in a wrong relationship to God". (P. Watson : op.cit. p. 134.)

Luther was well aware of the ambiguity of prayer. He saw clearly that it could be a most subtle means of hiding man from God , if previously a true religious relationship had not been established : if a proper understanding of His ways with men had not been arrived at. God could , for instance , be regarded as little more than a 'Deus ex machina' ; He could be sought solely on man's terms. Luther , however , saw that prayer itself needed to be redeemed before it could become a source of real blessing to man. Only in the dimension of responsible , personal existence before God can prayer be made ; and only within that dimension can the question of whether or not we really know God as He is be settled.

Luther did not (as has been commonly supposed) withhold an acknowledgement of the fact that man can know of God before He speaks to him ; but he strenuously insisted that the ground of man's knowledge of God must always be that God has revealed Himself to man. The content of human prayer must be radically affected by that knowledge. "The problem of prayer . . is part of the much larger theological problem of the doctrine of God , and His relation to the world". (R.H. Coates: 'Realm of Prayer'. p. 40.) Because of this fact , Luther is often concerned to distinguish between the two kinds of knowledge which man may possess with regard to God. "There is a double knowledge of God" , he says ; "general and particular. All men have the general knowledge , namely , that there is a God , that He created heaven and earth , that He is just , that He punisheth the wicked. But what God thinketh of us , what His will is toward us , what He will give or what He will do , to the end that we may be delivered from sin and death and be saved (which is the true knowledge of God indeed) this they know not". ('Comm. on Gal.' ed. by Middleton. p. 318.)

Luther , of course , regarded this latter knowledge as vital for the establishing of a prayer-relationship. Without it , in fact , the relationship cannot exist at all. But it can be founded only by the 'higher person'. "Human prayer . . is secondary ; it is the yearning and revealing love of God that is always primary". (R.H. Coates: op.cit. p. 50.) In the following section we shall be concerned to emphasise that basic fact.

(2). Prayer and 'Promise'.

Luther's conception of the 'Promise of God' is one place where we can note his insistence on the primacy of the divine factor in the religious relationship, and in prayer. The subject will be referred to, and further treated, in particular contexts later in this work; but it will be of considerable help to set down a general outline of Luther's thought here, before proceeding with the massive theme of Prayer and Faith.

It is essential to note first that, for Luther, prayer has a strong objective foundation. "We should not lean to our own strength . . . our own feeling . . . our own works, but to that which is without us, that is to say, the promise and truth of God, which cannot deceive us". (Comm. on Gal. p.352.) Here, of course, Luther is concerned to draw a contrast between Romanism and evangelical faith.

More than anyone, Luther was responsible for pointing out that the 'success' of prayer depends not in the least on man's worthiness, but solely on the promise of God. "It oftentimes comes to pass that the mind beginneth first to doubt whether prayer will anything avail or not. They that are brought to this point cannot pray, especially if they measure the same after the sense and feeling of their own unworthiness. But here thou must not regard what thou art, but rather look to the promise of God, the necessity of prayer . . .". (Comm. on Psalms of Degrees. p.7.)

It has been recorded that Veit Dietrich, who was fortunate enough to hear Luther at prayer, was astonished that he "leaned so heavily on the promises contained in the Psalms, as if he were sure everything would take place according to his asking". (Corpus Ref. 2, 159). Luther's personal advice is: ". . . Accept the Promise, and hold God to it". And his personal practice substantiates it: "Dear Lord, to be sure, I have Thy Word. Help us, because Thou hast promised and commanded that we shall . . . get what we desire". (Erl. 43, 289). To Luther, the promise ('Verheissung') is "das Hauptstück, Grund, und Kraft aller Gebete". (ibid. 16, 69).

It is, then, God's nature, not man's feelings, which is primary in prayer. Hence prayer can never be 'wishful thinking', to Luther. Nor can it be just a remedy for man's helplessness. As he makes clear: "Prayer is cold, listless, and difficult, unless the heart be already kindled by the coals of blessing". (Erl. vii. 130.) Luther would realise - though he does not say so here - that this 'blessing' must be clearly seen to proceed naturally from the nature of God before it could in any way 'kindle the heart'. A blessing which, so to speak, took the praying person 'by surprise' would not be an adequate dynamic for genuine, truly personal prayer. The mere fact that the blessing was felt would not, in itself, be enough 'guarantee' that a proper prayer would follow.

An adequate dynamic is not to be found, then, in Luther's view, except in and with a personal appreciation of the character of the God who bestows the blessing. Christ cannot bestow His 'benefits' without

first bestowing a recognition in man of His Being. Both, indeed, come together. Yet the character of God must be seen to be primary. As Luther declares: "The mercy of a freely-promising God, and His truth which fulfils that promise, are the true causes of hope. Wherefore, the object of faith and of hope is a freely-promising God, or the Word itself of God promising, and nothing else". (Sel. Works. Vol.3. p. 257.)

In one of those characteristically strong utterances, Luther says: "As God has bound Himself unto us by His promises, He will, of grace, be faithful unto these promises". (ibid. Vol.1. p. 424.) This conviction is found to give rise to a practice in Luther's own devotion, which at first sight might seem to represent something of a 'relapse'. To use Heiler's words: "An . . . effective method for persuading God to hear (prayer) consists in the claiming of His promises; the petitioner lays hold of God through His own words". ('Prayer'. p.255.) And of Luther, in particular, the same author remarks that he reminds God of His promise when he prays . . . 'ihm seine Verheissung vorzuwerfen'. ('Das Gebet'. p. 374.) But this 'relapse' is more imaginary than real. It is merely a forceful way of expressing his utter confidence in God. (This point will be further treated under 'Petition'.)

It is almost unnecessary to state that, for Luther, the Promises of God in connection with prayer are conveyed through the Person of Christ. "We have a promise in Christ that we shall be heard; yea, and Christ Himself also hath prescribed and taught us by the very words, syllables and letters which we should use in prayer". (Comm. on Ps. of Degrees. p.8.) Again, he says: "When we pray, we should appear in the presence of God as miserable and wretched sinners, not trusting upon our own merit or worthiness, but clothed . . . with His mercies and promises. . . . for the promises of God are nothing else but mercies and compassions freely offered to us in Christ". (ibid. p. 268.)

Luther is helpful enough to give us an illustration of these 'mercies and compassions'. First, he reiterates his conviction that "in every prayer there is a promise included" (ibid. p.213); for, "if there were no promise, there would be no place nor ground for prayer". (Sel. Works. Vol.4. p.16.) But he then goes on to illustrate what he means by 'promise' by selecting the word 'righteous' (in connection with Psalm 129, verse iv). This word, Luther says, indicates the promise that, since God is 'righteous', "we should not murmur, nor blaspheme God, as though He were not mindful of us, or had not regard of us". (Comm. on Ps. of Deg. p. 213.)

In fact, Luther regarded a genuine appreciation of each attribute of God as the key to a corresponding confidence in the prayer which related to it. If, for example, a man does know that God is 'righteous', he must also know that God's promise to be righteous in His dealings with him will be fulfilled and honoured. This knowledge, Luther claimed, could have nothing but a salutary, practical effect upon men's prayers. It was lack of this knowledge, and the persistence of 'doubt' regarding what God might do to men, which made Romanist prayer so fear-motivated and so lacking the confident ring which we hear in Luther.

Luther draws a further distinction with respect to the general subject of 'Prayer and Promise' - one which will be enlarged upon in the section on 'Petition'. Meantime, we can note that, in his Commentary on Psalm 132, verse x, he speaks of the difference which Christians are to observe between (what he calls) the 'spiritual' and 'corporeal' promises. "For the corporeal promises have a condition as touching our works joined unto them. So the corporeal kingdom was promised to David with this condition: if his posterity should continue in the word and will of the Lord. Therefore, although the people of Israel were deprived of the kingdom and driven out of their land, yet notwithstanding the Promise as touching the seed of Abraham was not taken from them". (ibid. p. 281.) This simple contrast which Luther draws will result, as we shall see, in his principle of 'conditional' and 'unconditional' prayer. In our prayers, Luther insists, we must be clear as to whether a 'conditional' or 'unconditional' promise is attached to that for which we are praying at the moment.

One further contrast drawn by Luther can be noted here. It will serve a two-fold purpose, from our point of view - first, to re-emphasise the main theme of this section; and second, to provide a link between this section and the subsequent one on Prayer and Faith. The contrast is that drawn between the 'certainty' of the promise, and the 'certainty' of our faith, together with Luther's own assessment of their relative importance for a true doctrine of prayer.

Although he makes a distinction between them, he is convinced that they must be found together. "Where there is no promise there can be no faith; and again, where there is no faith, the promise is in vain". (Sol. Works. Vol.2. p. 189.) Nevertheless, the exclusively divine factor in prayer must still be considered primary. (This is true of all his doctrines. Although he maintained an admirable balance between the objective and subjective elements in any doctrine, in the last analysis he would insist that the objective factor was the constitutive element of it.) "Our faith is not always sufficiently firm", Luther remarks, "but is sometimes attacked by temptations, and becomes languid, and oftentimes well-nigh fails. Whereas the Promise, as being the eternal and immutable decree of God, stands for ever fixed, firm, and immovable". (ibid.)

(3) Prayer and Faith.

Probably no theme receives more sympathetic treatment in the whole of Luther's theology than the true function of faith. He insists that whereas "the office of the law is to work, the office of faith is to assent unto the promises". (Comm. on Gal. p. 239.) Just as, for Luther, 'the law and the promise are separate asunder, so also are doing and believing'. (ibid.) This believing, moreover, is not a vague, purely subjective manifestation of faith. Faith is the conviction in the mind of the truth of God's Word and promise in the Gospel. No greater contrast can be observed in Luther's works than that between the Romanist view of faith and that of Luther himself. This fundamental difference, indeed, is the key to much of the radical divergence of Luther from the traditional theology - be it the theology of prayer, of the Sacraments, of the Holy Spirit, of the Church, etc.

We can proceed with an examination of Luther's doctrine of faith in relation to prayer by noting again the distinction which he draws between the 'two ways of believing'. "The one, when I believe that God is, and know that the things are true which are spoken about Him . . . But this kind of faith should be called a certain indefinite knowledge, or opinion, rather than faith. The other way of believing is when I believe in God; that is, when I not only believe that those things which are said of Him are true, but when I place all my trust and hope in Him, and so stay my mind upon Him as to have no doubt of His gracious good-will towards me; and when I moreover believe that He will perform all those things in me which are gloriously said and proclaimed of Him". (Sel. Works. Vol.2. p. 336.)

It is perhaps characteristic of Luther's dynamic theology that he reduces the four traditional stages of knowledge of God to these two. He presents us with a simple 'either . . . or'. And this not for 'theological convenience' alone. These two views of faith are, in practice, the only ones of real consequence for religious devotion.

Indeed, these two views of faith really amount to two different views of God Himself - and Luther clearly makes this point in his Large Catechism. "To have a god is simply to trust and believe in one with our whole heart. As I have often said, the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and confidence are right, then likewise your god is the true God. For the two, faith and God, have inevitable connection. Now I say, whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your god". (Lenker ed. Vol. 24. p.44.)

This point is expanded in Luther's highly individualistic treatment of the 1st Commandment. In one place he declares that the 1st Commandment means "Since I alone am God, thou shalt place all thy confidence, trust, and faith on Me alone, and on no one else. For that is not to have a god if you call him god only with your lips, or worship him with the knees or bodily gestures; but if you trust him with the heart, and look to him for all good, grace, and favour, whether in works or sufferings, in life or death, in joy and sorrow". (ibid. Vol.1. p. 194.)

The contrast which Luther implies is not far to seek. His criticism of the contemporary Roman doctrine and practice of prayer rested upon his criticism of its doctrine of God. Because it failed to see God as essentially a God of Promise, it necessarily failed to practise (or even to see the need for) the prayer of faith. Boehmer comments that: "The Reformer (Luther) never wearies of emphasising that, in the 'Popish' religion, men do not know the true God. . . Instead of the true God they worship an idol, . . . a Potzmann (puppet) which each one dresses up in his own clothes". ('Luther'. p. 282.)

Here is one of the many places where Luther uses the same word as the contemporary Church, i.e. 'God' (similarly, 'grace', 'faith', etc.) and where the content of the word differs enormously in their respective understanding of it. In his Sermon concerning the 10 Lepers, Luther pinpoints something of this divergence of interpretation, and its effect on piety. "It is not enough to believe the existence of God, and to

weary His ears with long prayers (which abuse of things has now most perniciously prevailed among Christians). Rather look at those lepers, and contemplate the display of faith in them - how it teaches, without the help of any master, to pray successfully . . . True faith in the merciful and good will of God does not distrust; and for that reason the prayer is powerful and effectual". (Sel. Works. Vol.1. p. 461.)

It is of interest, and appropriate in this context, to note that Luther is just as critical of the 'faith' which is mystical surrender as of the 'faith' which is egocentric - because both fail equally to respond to God's Promise, which alone is constitutive of true prayer. As an example of the latter, Luther's comments 'Concerning Two Sorts of Men in Respect of Faith' can be quoted. He points out that the main difference between 'theocentric' and 'egocentric' faith (as we might call them) is that one is faith pure and simple, founded on God alone, whereas the other is founded on man's own perceptions and experiences of Divine beneficence.

His own words are that those with egocentric faith "praise God and seek to serve Him so long as He bestows perceptible benefits upon them, but as soon as these are withdrawn, then an unwillingness seizes their minds to serve God any longer, and . . . the whole of their worship of God is frozen up altogether". Those with true faith, he says, "love God and extol His goodness with praises as much when God deprives them of all those external supplies, as they do when He abundantly bestows these things upon them". (Sel. Works. 417f. - quoted in P. Watson: op.cit. p. 42.)

As a pointer to the faith which is 'mystic resignation', we might simply endorse the comment that "The faith which makes us throw ourselves upon God is no mood of mere mystical abandonment. It is our very life, as Luther said. Christianity, therefore, is an interwoven tissue of promises and prayers of faith". (T.M.Lindsay: op.cit. Vol.1. p. 431.) It can hardly be denied that the 'Christianity' of Mysticism, as well as that of orthodox Romanism, could in no sense claim to be included in that definition. This is not to suggest, however, that Luther depreciates religious 'feeling' and 'experience'; he simply denies that faith is founded either on 'feeling' or 'experience'. 'Feeling' and 'experience' actually spring from faith. Faith is logically, and chronologically, prior.

This insistence on the primacy and indispensability of faith applies not only to prayer, but also to every channel through which God becomes real to men. The 'Promise' (or 'grace') of God is appropriated only through faith - whatever be the specific channel through which it is mediated. In Luther's Commentary on the 1st 22 Psalms, we find this comment on Ps. 7, verse 1: "This verse we may bring forward against those who do not believe that faith and hope are necessary either for prayer, or for receiving the grace of God, or for receiving the benefit (as we term it) of the sacraments". (Sel. Works. Vol. 3. p. 339.) In one of the most picturesque of Luther's statements, we read that: "Faith ought to use . . . ceremonies (of which prayer is one) as a rider does a horse". (ibid. Vol.4. p. 61.)

There is no aspect of the Christian's experience which is exempt from the necessity of prior faith. Literally, it is everything. "God the Father has made everything to depend upon faith; so that whosoever has it has all things, and he who has it not has nothing". ('On Christian Lib.' W. & B. p. 109.) This being so, it is only logical for Luther to deduce that "so powerful a thing is faith to obtain anything from God that, with Him, the thing is considered as done before ever it is prayed for. . . Your faith, before ever ye began to pray, obtained that for you". (Sermon on 10 Lepers: Sel. Works. Vol. 1. p. 467) Luther's objective grounds for his assertion are carefully given, i.e. a specific promise of God. "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear". (Isaiah 65. 24.)

As a result of all this, Luther is now in a position to state a principle which, although it is so easily acceptable to modern Protestantism, pierced the hearts and offended the consciences of mediaeval Catholics - the principle that, ultimately, there is only one kind of divine worship, namely, faith. "If it is an established fact that man has neither power nor right to do anything in the way of influencing God; if the mere thought of moving God to alter His feelings means the death of true piety; if the entire relation between God and man is determined by the believing spirit, i.e. by firmly established trust in God, humility, and unceasing prayer; if, finally, all ceremonies are worthless, there can no longer be exercises which in a special sense can be described as 'worship of God'. There is only one direct worship of God, which is faith". (A. Harnack: 'History of Dogma'. Vol. VII. p. 190.)

Nevertheless, faith cannot exist 'in vacuo'; it must be exercised. Hence, Luther - fully recognising the different channels through which it can be exercised - can claim that "Prayer is the highest exercise of faith, and the highest worship of God". (Man. of the Bk. of Ps. p. 224.) One of Luther's favourite names for God is that of 'Hearer of Prayer'; and we find frequent counsel in his works that men should consciously acknowledge this essential attribute of God. "See that thou diligently learn this name and title which David here giveth unto Him, that He is 'Auditor precum', the hearer of prayers, and beware when thou prayest that by doubting or incredulity thou take not from Him His name, as many times we do". (Comm. on Ps. of Deg. p. 11.)

"The highest worship of God", Luther declares elsewhere, "is to ascribe to Him truth, righteousness, and whatsoever qualities we must ascribe to one in whom we believe. In doing this, the soul shows itself prepared to do His whole will; in doing this it hallows His name, and gives itself up to be dealt with as it may please God". ('On Christian Lib'. p. 110.) Such, really, is Luther's description of prayer. Dr. Brunner is echoing almost the exact words of Luther when he remarks: "Prayer is really nothing but faith. So much prayer - so much faith. So little prayer - so little faith". ('Our Faith'. p. 96.) And the same writer can declare, in another place, that "Faith means being open to the 'Thou', just as unbelief is being shut up in oneself". ('Revelation and Reason'. p. 137.)

To be really 'open to the Thou' means, for Luther, to be ready for that 'speaking with God' which he regarded as true prayer. Without such 'speaking', faith cannot have any permanent existence. "I have ever testified sedulously how necessary Christian prayer is, without which faith cannot subsist and endure". (Sel. Works. Vol.2. p. 5.) And again, in the Treatise on Good Works, he remarks: "Prayer . . is a special exercise of faith, and faith makes the prayer so acceptable that, either it will be surely granted, or something better than we ask will be given in its stead . . For, where this faith and confidence is not in the prayer, the prayer is dead, and nothing more than a grievous labour and work". ('Works of M.L.' Vol.1. p. 225f.)

(4) Prayer and Justification.

It has been said already that the Christian doctrine of prayer always implies, and depends upon, the Christian doctrine of God. We must now remind ourselves that it implies also the Christian doctrine of man - man as a being created in the image of God, a personal being capable of holding communion with his Creator, conceived as a personal, living God. This communion, however, is possible only between God and redeemed man. For Luther, prayer rightly understood means the converse which takes place between God and His re-created child.

Hence, Luther's condemnation falls heavily not only upon 'meritorious' outward acts; he is as severe upon the misguided attempts of the semi-mystics as he is upon those of the semi-Pelagians. As has been tersely remarked: for Luther, "inward dispositions are no more acceptable as a basis for fellowship with God than are external acts. What man is is ruled out, as much as what man does". (E.M. Carlsen: 'Reinterp. of Luther'. p. 85.) Luther recognised only one basis for fellowship with God - man's full recognition that the faith by which God's promises are apprehended is itself the gift of God, and that, by his acceptance of that faith, he could be regarded as 'worthy' of communing with his God.

No error could be greater, in Luther's view, than that to which Roman theology was prone - the error of believing that fellowship with God came about at God's level, i.e. at the level of holiness. Man must, so it declared, 'make himself worthy' of communing with God. Mystical religion suffered from the same error. In all three of the mystic's "ordo salutis" (purification, illumination, union), fellowship with God was supposed to come about at God's level.

Luther considered it intolerable that salvation should be described as an 'ascent' from man to God instead of as a downward movement from God to man. Man's only hope is not to achieve worthiness, but to be counted as worthy (i.e. to be 'justified'). He must recognise divine promises for what they really are; he must see himself as he really is. That 'moment of recognition' is the stuff out of which prayer is fashioned. "The all-important thing for Luther is that God does love . . therefore, there is hope for egocentric man. Because God's love is 'agape', fellowship with Him comes into being at man's level. Whereas

the Mediaeval Church regarded it as self-evident that fellowship with God comes about on the basis of man's holiness . . . Luther conceives of fellowship with God on the basis of sin. Only the conscious sinner can know the meaning of the fellowship that comes into being because of God's saving love". (E.M. Carlsen : op.cit. p. 82.)

Hence , we find Luther declaring that "Nothing makes a man good except faith , nor evil except unbelief. The person is justified and saved not by works nor by laws , but by the Word of God , i.e. by the promise of His grace , and by faith , that the glory might remain God's , Who saved us not by works of righteousness which we have done , but according to His mercy by the Word of His grace , when we believed". ('Works'. Vol.2. p. 332f. - 'Treatise on Christian Liberty'.)

This 'justification', of course , is given in the Person of Christ. Without Him there could not be the basis of that faith which 'justifies'. Justification , in a word , is "The grace revealed in Christ that , through Christ , we have a reconciled God , so that sin can no more accuse us , the conscience being , through a believing reliance on the mercy of God , brought into safety and peace". (Sel. Works. Vol.1. p. 92.) Luther cannot conceive of any saving knowledge of God (that is , representing a right relationship to God) except a knowledge which , explicitly or implicitly , may be said to 'contain' Christ. Anything less than a saving knowledge means that the prayer of faith is an impossibility - because faith , for Luther , always means exclusively 'saving faith'.

Thus , when Ritschl says that "Christian prayer is . . . a special manifestation of faith in the fatherly providence of God , which springs from reconciliation" , he is describing exactly Luther's own viewpoint. ('Doc. of Reconciliation'. p. 642.) When Coates declares that "the supreme fact of the Atonement . . . profoundly affects the doctrine of prayer in the New Testament . . . giving to prayer an infinitely wider range and a new significance" , he is giving an account of Luther's discovery centuries before. (op.cit. p. 185.) Few men have reminded Christendom of the fact that all prayer is profoundly conditioned by the experience of reconciliation with a holy God through penitence and faith , more than Luther. No one more than he repudiated the sacramentalist approach to prayer , in favour of the 'evangelical'. "It was because the religion of the Papacy . . . especially by its doctrine of merit, effectively if not deliberately dispensed with the mediation of Christ , that Luther came to denounce the Pope as anti-Christ". (P.Watson: op.cit. p. 96.)

As has been stated : "Luther saw the relation between God and man in Christ Jesus , of which the divine side is grace , and the human, faith , to be the ground of Christian existence from the beginning to the end". (E.G. Rupp : op.cit. p. 165.) Or , as a German theologian has said : "The objective power which is the enduring basis of the religious experiences of the Christian is not any sum of thoughts concerning faith , however obtained , but is the Man Jesus". (W.Hermann : op.cit. p. 47.) Truly the "longing of the Christian for an objective reality to support his faith is made effective in Luther's Christianity". (ibid. p. 48.)

No doubt contemporary Romanism knew of, and preached, this 'objective reality'. No doubt the 'doctrine of justification' is the central point of the Catholic system and also of the Protestant. Yet, Luther's emphasis was not that of Romanism. So far from being directed towards God in order to change His attitude to men, Christ's atoning work is directed towards men in order to bring them into a new relationship to God, if only they receive Christ into their hearts by faith. Luther sees the doctrine of justification always in terms of its application to the question of man's relationship with God.

We read in one place that "The Reformers used the word 'justification' partly because it balanced the subjective doctrine of faith with an objective doctrine of the merits of Christ . . . but neither in the doctrine of Justification nor in the thought of the imputation of the merits of Christ does Luther intend us to forget the personal relationship established through faith". (E.G. Rupp: op.cit. p. 167.) Unless the doctrine of Justification leads to a 'consciousness of sonship', it must remain an academic question only. For true prayer cannot be made except within this 'sense of sonship' - and it is this prayer which gives life and reality to faith.

Dr. Mackinnon has authoritatively confirmed that "The assurance of salvation in virtue of the truth of God's Word and promise in the Gospel, and of the consciousness of sonship, is . . . a cardinal feature of Luther's theory of justification by faith. It distinguishes his theory from that of the Nominalists which makes justification dependent on the will of God in accepting or not accepting man's works, regarded as merits, and therefore makes his final salvation problematic". (op.cit. Vol.1. p. 200.)

Luther himself insists that "Where there is a right faith which believes that the sanctification of Christ alone avails before God, and becomes our sanctification, that faith sanctifies all our works (of which prayer is one); they are not sanctified from any respect to our own merit". (Sel.Works. Vol.2. p. 100.) Luther repudiates any suggestion of Pelagianism. "I must do nothing but apprehend Christ by faith. . . Christ and our faith must thoroughly be joined together". (Comm. on Gal. p. 322.)

In fact, without this 'justifying faith', prayer would be (according to Luther) either of two things: either the utterance of selfish desire, or more or less a 'soul-emotion' - however intense that 'soul-emotion' might be. Simply because Luther believed justifying faith to be that act by which man moved out from a self-centred existence, he could never do anything but resist the meritorious flavour of Romanist piety, and he could never hold more than a slight approval for mystical piety. Faith belongs to the dimension of personal intercourse. It can never be a 'settled gain'.

It is along these lines that the protagonist of Luther will be able to answer the implied criticism of Dr. W.D. Niven. He speaks of some points 'on which Protestants fell into difficulties', and proceeds to introduce one of them by posing the question: "First, is justification

once for all , or has it to be constantly repeated ? The former is the view of the Westminster Confession. The sins of believers , it holds , do not rob a man of his justification. The other view has had many supporters , starting with Luther himself. "Every day" , he says, "we are justified. Our justification will not be complete until the Resurrection". This latter is surely a dangerous reversion to the Romanist doctrine". ('Reformation Principles'. p. 78.)

In the first place , the implication above (i.e. that Luther did think the 'sins of believers robbed them of their justification') is entirely unwarranted. Luther's actual attitude was quite otherwise - as will be conclusively shown in chapter VII. In the second place , Luther held that the former view was the more 'dangerous' - though that was not the sole reason why he held the latter. The truth of a doctrine was always as important to him as its possible effects upon piety - even though the observation of 'abuse' often provided the motive-power of his 'critique'.

However , Dr. Niven himself provides the key to the answer which Luther would have given him. " the classical doctrine of justification by faith is essentially forensic . In present-day conception of the relation of God to sinners , the forensic view has lost the convincing force it used to have". (ibid. p. 94f.) This , to Luther (and to the present writer) , is no loss. Precisely because the viewpoint represented in the Westminster Confession was so forensic , Luther rejected it. Justification is a religious category , not a theological one ; it is a continuous practical experience , not a theoretical proposition ; it is the 'dynamic of devotion' , not a 'settled gain'.

As Hermann has confirmed : "It is clear that faith itself loses its original character and power as soon as it is regarded as a settled gain , as a foundation on which we can proceed to build in our own strength. Luther knew well that the content of faith is not mere doctrine , and that therefore faith itself is not mere knowledge that is to be supplemented by action. For faith itself is life and activity". (op.cit. p. 334.) Justifying faith is the power which not only creates, but sustains , the new relationship of man with God.

In the light of the above , we shall not be surprised to read that , "Just because it is usual to see Luther's importance exclusively in this - that he formulated the 'doctrine of justification' , it is of service to point out . . . that Luther's Christianity can be understood while this term is not made use of". (A. Harnack: op.cit. p.206.) Luther is simply concerned throughout his works (whatever language he uses) to state his conviction that man cannot commune with God in what he himself initiates , but only in receiving and enjoying what God gives to him ; and , moreover , that this receiving is quite inseparable from the use of what is received.

Hermann's words certainly summarise Luther's doctrine in this matter : "Since we come into a right state of dependence upon God by our understanding of His act of self-revelation , we receive a gift that we possess only when we make use of it". (op.cit. p. 297.)

Boehmer is another writer who feels that the concept of justification by faith is not indispensable for a complete expression of Luther's ideas. Neither in the lesser Catechism, nor even in the Greater, does the phrase occur once. Luther's idea of justification is essentially religious or 'devotional', rather than theological. "He (Luther) understands justification not as a kind of physical miracle in which the substance of sin is suddenly driven out by the supernatural substance of grace, but as a spiritual and psychological miracle, accomplished in the human soul without any material agency, and which consists simply in the gaining of a new spiritual attitude, that of unre-served trust in the gracious spiritual attitude of God. Faith is conceived not as an external submission on the part of the human being to the external regulations in which the doctrine of the Church is presented to him, but as a 'Gesinnung', a spiritual attitude or state of feeling which is directed not towards anything external, be it Church or doctrine, but again towards a Gesinnung, the spiritual attitude of God". (op.cit. p. 271.)

In a word, to Luther the doctrine of justification by faith was a theological statement about an intense religious experience. It is a gross misrepresentation of Luther's view (to be found in Roman circles) to claim that he used the doctrine as a kind of 'refuge' from practical Christianity. As has been pointed out: "Luther recognises with the Apostle the danger that lurks in the doctrine of justification by faith, or rather the abuse of it, and the need of guarding against the use of liberty as an occasion of the flesh". (J. Mackinnon: op. cit. Vol.4. p. 254.)

But nothing could wrest from him his exclusively theocentric view. God, not man, is the source of man's justification: God, not man, is the source of man's faith; God, not man, is the source of man's prayer. The God who 'justifies' is also the God who 'sanctifies'; the God who creates faith also directs its expression; the God who hears prayer also gives the power to pray at all. Harnack sums up the point thus: "As contrasted with the Mediaeval view, his (Luther's) thought is this - that God has not merely brought into existence objective provisions for salvation, to which there must then correspond a subjective line of action that is in a way independent, and of which the evidence is given in . . . faith; but that He bestows faith". (op.cit. Vol.VII. p. 201.)

Justifying faith, therefore, is not merely the preliminary to a prayer-relationship; it is communion with God - it is prayer. We can now understand more clearly perhaps what Luther means in saying that he who makes prayer simply a way to reach God "invents a god for himself, and one that does not hear". (Erl. xxiii. 18.) The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ was, to Luther, the expression of a profound evangelical truth - the truth that redeemed man finds in Christ not merely a necessary condition for his communion with God, but that very communion itself. He had himself found that the living exercise of faith (which is rightly called prayer) is the actual communion of man with God (c.f. Erl. x. 26, 108; or, lxi. 307).

(5) Prayer and 'Gloria Dei'.

This particular aspect of Luther's thought - that prayer is essentially a means of 'glorifying God' - is, in a sense, only a restatement of the preceding section. It can, therefore, be brief. However, we would include it not only because a brief treatment is intrinsically desirable, but because its inclusion may do something to repudiate one of the strangest and most unjustifiable prejudices of theological scholarship; namely, that 'seeking the glory of God' is almost exclusively a Calvinistic notion.

To one writer at least we owe a debt of gratitude for declaring that "The watchword for Luther no less than Calvin was 'solī Deo gloria'." (P. Watson. op.cit. p. 14.) Luther's own claim was that "My doctrine is such that it setteth forth and preacheth the grace and glory of God alone." (Gal. III 40. i.12.) This is certainly true as regards his doctrine of prayer. The supreme test of his own, and of all other doctrines, was whether they set forth the 'glory of God', or not.

For the purpose of our examination of Luther's view of prayer and Gloria Dei, however, we can note here a very significant difference in emphasis between Calvin's notion, and Luther's. It will be a fair statement (insofar as any generalisation is fair) to say that, whereas for Calvin the 'glory of God' is conceived primarily in terms of God's sovereignty, for Luther it is primarily God's "fatherly love". This, of course, has an important bearing on any doctrine of prayer arising therefrom.

Looking back on his own earlier prayer-experiences, Luther might well claim that, the sterner one's notion of God was, the more difficult it became to 'give glory to Him'. And, while not in the least deprecating Calvin's view, it remains true that prayer will tend to be more real and intense where the dominant notion of God is that of 'Father', rather than that of 'Sovereign' (though these notions are not, of course, mutually exclusive). This statement is easily confirmed by a study of Luther's and Calvin's practice of prayer.

At present, however, we are concerned merely to show that the principle of 'Gloria Dei' was of considerable importance to Luther. His essential presupposition, as far as prayer (and every other expression of the religious life) is concerned, may be found in such a passage as the following: "To give glory unto God is to believe in Him, to count Him true, wise, righteous, merciful, almighty; briefly, to acknowledge Him to be the Author and Giver of all goodness. This, reason doth not, but faith. . . The chiefest thing that God requireth of man is that he giveth unto Him His glory and His divinity; that is to say, that he taketh Him not for an idol, but for God Who regardeth him, heareth him, shows mercy unto him. . ." (Comm. on Gal. p. 193f.)

Ultimately, Luther's criticism of Romanism's attitude is grounded in its failure to do this. "the justicaries . . . fast, they pray . . . but because they think to appease the wrath of God, and deserve grace by things, they give no glory to God". (ibid. p.195.) "God giveth His gifts freely . . . and that is the praise and glory of His divinity. But the merit-mongers . . . will deserve the same by their own works."

Thus they would utterly take from Him the glory of His divinity". (Gal. Ep. 81. ii. 16.) As one writer has remarked, "The fault of the Papacy was that . . . it would not let Him be God". (P. Watson : op. cit. p.22.)

Nor was this the result of excusable ignorance, as far as Luther was concerned. Roman Catholic piety, with its eudaemonism and moralism, was a subtle form of idolatry, rooted in human self-centredness. "How many there are even now who do not worship Him as God, but as they imagine Him to themselves! . . . For is not this to change the glory of God into the likeness of an imagination and a dream, if thou neglectest the work thou owest, and worshippest Him with a work thyself hast chosen, and . . . believest God to be such an one as should have respect unto thee". (Römerbr. 20.3.)

Luther knew exactly how easy it was to be mistaken as regards man's attempts to honour the motto 'soli Deo gloria'. There was no question but that his prayers, in the earlier years, had been made with a 'single heart, of a good zeal, and for the glory of God'. But the zeal he then showed was like that of Saul of Tarsus before he met Christ on the Damascus road, and, for all his intention of serving God, he afterward discovered that he had been doing nothing of the kind. As has been justly pointed out, Soli Deo Gloria had another meaning for Luther the reformer than it had for Luther the monk. (c.f. P. Watson: op. cit. p. 60). We certainly cannot imagine Luther the monk declaring, with intense conviction: "It is not needful for thee to do this or that. Only give our Lord God the glory, take what He gives thee, and believe what He tells thee". (Erl. xviii. 20).

It does not contradict Luther's idea of man's 'spontaneous' response to God to say that he acknowledged also the element of duty in a proper attitude to God. Man 'owes' God all he is and has. Man can never become God's creditor; and a healthy sense of obligation is the expression of man's willingness to 'give God the glory'. It is from this point of view that Luther can make one of his outspoken remarks: "There is no other worship of God than thanksgiving". (W A. XVII.1.401. 20f). "The offering of thanks gives God His divine honour; it allows Him to be and remain God, the Creator and Giver of all things; but the offering of works robs Him of His honour, and does not allow Him to remain God, but makes Him into an idol". (c.f. W A. XX.2. 602. 30 f.)

Luther, in fact, had found that if a man possessed anything less than 'justifying faith', he would be bound to 'rob God of His honour'. As has been amply shown: "This . . . is the office of faith, that it honours with the utmost veneration and the highest reputation Him in whom it believes, inasmuch as it holds Him to be truthful and worthy of belief. . . . Thus the soul, in firmly believing the promises of God, holds Him to be true and righteous; and it can attribute to God no higher glory than the credit of being so". (On Christian Lib. p.110.)

Consequently, Luther arrives at this identification: that 'giving glory to God' is the same as the 'article of justification'. When it is said that the "purpose of prayer is to glorify God" (Hallesby: Prayer. p.100) - which we shall later show within the context of Luther's own

prayers - that is but a corollary of the statement that the article of justification is the only surety of prayer acceptable to God. Without the efficacy of justifying faith it is impossible even to recognise God as essentially 'auditor precum'. Hence, "in defining heresy, Luther counts beside those who err either about the Godhead or the manhood of Christ, a third class of those who do not let Him do His work. . . To deny the justifying grace of Christ is to deprive Christ of His glory, and, in fact, to have another god". (Hildebrandt: 'Melanchthon' - qu. by P. Watson: op.cit. p. 61.)

It is precisely because man persists in 'dividing' the glory of God, and in particular depriving Christ of His glory, that Luther is so antagonistic to the practice of praying to the saints. "We who profess the name of Christ . . . leave God our true and only Saviour, and implore the help of saints. Hence, St. Leonard is worshipped as the liberator of the imprisoned; St. Sebastian is invoked by those who are in dread of pestilence; St. George is the protecting saint of military troops of horse and foot; St. Erasmus is said to bless with riches those that call upon him; St. Christopher is openly worshipped as the god of land and sea, and his image is affixed to all doors of temples and to all prows of ships, and adored by all sailors. And thus we have divided the glory of God, and of His saving mercies, which is due to Him alone, unto saints set up by idolatrous men. . . This psalm, however (107), rightly ascribes all the glory to God alone". (Man. of the Book of Psalms. p. 288f.)

For Luther, no man can experience 'blessedness' in the religious life, in the life of prayer, unless he first "wills the will of God and His glory". (Römerbr. 217. 23.) Rather should we say that that willing is blessedness. For blessedness and every other exaltation arising out of communion with God is a 'by-product' of the human readiness (itself God's gift) to give glory to God alone. Luther, in the following statement, does not mean that God rewards man for his faith with something given in addition to that faith, at a later moment of time; but that faith (like virtue) is its 'own reward'. "When God sees that truth is ascribed to Him, and that in the faith of our hearts He is honoured with all the honour of which He is worthy, then in return He honours us on account of that faith". (On Christian Lib. p. 111.)

In a word: a true prayer-experience begins simultaneously with the fact of 'justification', and is the infallible evidence of it; for 'prayer is the highest exercise of faith'.

PART II. PRAYER IN RELATION TO OTHER BASIC DOCTRINES.

Chapter II. PRAYER AND THE WORD.

Introduction.

It will have become clear from the preceding chapter that, for Luther, there can be no right understanding of God, and no genuine prayer to Him, without His Word. "No man can understand what God's will is, but in His good Word". (Gal. E.T. iv.6.) Hence prayer is intimately bound up with this 'Word'. Indeed, the intensely personal nature of God's dealings with men - reaching their climax in prayer - is nowhere more vividly illustrated than in the place of honour which the conception of the Word held in Luther's theological thought.

Speech is characteristic of persons; and, as a mode of communication with others, as a medium of personal relationship, it holds pride of place. In prayer God speaks to man, and man speaks to God. God's Word is primary, and man's secondary. This Word of God, moreover, is conceived by Luther 'dynamically'; he does not share the theologian's tendency to 'divide' the Word into a broad, unmediated category, and a narrower, mediated category. He is certainly unable to regard the Word as a vague principle, 'standing behind' the various 'local manifestations' of that Word; it always has historical content. The distinction which he recognises is of the same order as the distinction which can be drawn between God the Maker of the world, and Christ the historical Saviour.

It must be admitted at the outset that, when we study Luther's notion of the Word - and this can be done only by 'piecing together' the innumerable isolated references which he makes to the subject - we may well find that his whole doctrine of the Word seems, at first sight, to be somewhat confused, since he uses the term 'Word' for apparently different things. Sometimes he seems to identify the Word with Christ (e.g. 'Table Talk'. p.69.); sometimes with Scripture (e.g. Sol. Works. Vol.2. p. 7.); and sometimes with the spoken word (e.g. Man. of the Book of Psalms. p. 325.)

Purely for convenience, we shall attempt to deal with these three identifications separately (in so far as this can be done at all) in their respective relation to Prayer; but it is necessary to remember throughout that Luther regards the 'Word' as a unity. It will also be necessary to remember that the primary significance of the Word is Christ - even when Luther may be tempting us to imagine otherwise. For him, the written and spoken word are secondary. (Thus, on the whole, it is an unjust judgment which claims that Luther substituted an 'infallible Bible' for an 'infallible Pope') "All authority belongs ultimately to Christ, the Word of God, alone, and even the authority of the Scriptures is secondary and derivative, pertaining to them only inasmuch as they bear witness to Christ, and are the vehicle of the Word". (P. Watson: op.cit. p. 175.)

(1) Christ the Word.

"The most significant influence of Paul upon Christian prayer", Heiler remarks, lies in the fact that, through him, it comes about that all communion with God has an immediate relation to Jesus Christ.

As Paul knows no other God than the God revealed in Christ, so he knows no other prayer than prayer to 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. ('Prayer'. p. 125) Luther is in the direct line of the Apostle in this, as well as in other respects, that his task, many centuries after the Apostle's work, was to rediscover and reemphasise the fact that all communion with God had an immediate relation to Jesus Christ.

Luther's God was the God revealed in Christ; Luther's prayer was prayer to 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. "All people that seek and labour to come to God through any other means than only through Christ (as Papists . . . heretics, etc.) walk in horrible darkness and error . . ., for, seeing they will not hear Christ or believe in Him (without whom no man knows God . . ., no man comes to the Father) they remain always in doubt and unbelief, know not how they stand with God. . . for 'he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father'". ('Table Talk'. p.43.) Harnack's judgment is that "the great reform which Luther effected both for faith and theology was that he made the historic Christ as the sole principle of the knowledge of God". (op.cit. p.199,n.)

Few things Luther criticised more in Romanism than its refusal to give due place to the historic Christ as sole principle of the knowledge of God, and (therefore) its refusal to give due place to the Mediatorship of Christ. This refusal was the inevitable outcome of its Pelagian approach to religion. Indeed, one of Luther's definitions of idolatry is: "All manner of devotion in those that would serve God without Christ the Mediator, His Word and command". ('Table Talk'. p.68.)

The following passage is one of many which confirm Luther's insistence on the inseparable connection between Prayer and the Word. Writing on the subject of monkish prayers, he declares: "In Popedom it was held a work of the greatest sanctity for the monks to sit in their cells and meditate of God . . . to be kindled with zeal, kneeling . . . praying, and having their imaginary contemplations of celestial objects, with such supposed devotion, that they wept for joy. All manner of religion where people serve God without His Word and command is simply idolatry . . . In like manner, all kinds of . . . prayers . . . are mere works of the flesh, for the monks hold they are holy and shall be saved, not through Christ, whom they view as a severe and angry Judge, but through the rule of their Order". (ibid. p. 68f.)

With such a doctrine of the divine nature, men could hardly fail to displease God with their prayers. Elsewhere, Luther describes such people as "vain spirits which so deal with God that they exclude the Mediator", and he forcibly advises them to "know that there is no other God besides this Man Christ Jesus". (Comm. on Gal. p. 15.) Indeed, 'Prayer and the Rule' had largely displaced 'Prayer and the Word' as the dominant devotional concept in contemporary Romanism.

From the same standpoint Luther resists any attempt of man to 'mount up to God' by means of a speculative or mystical type of prayer. It is futile to pray 'direct' to God - even were it possible - to discover what His will for man might be. His will and His nature are known exclusively in Christ. "Christ is the only mean . . . and the glass

by which we see God , that is to say , we know His will". (ibid. p.361). Again : "Christ has manifested His office of priesthood in this , that He has preached , made known , and revealed His Father unto us". (Table Talk. p.84.)

For Luther , to know God's will in any other way than through Christ is not only impossible , but 'perilous' for the seeker. Man cannot view God as Absolute ; the finite cannot pray direct to the infinite . "To aim at its perfect comprehension (God's will) is dangerous work , wherein we stumble and break our necks". (ibid. p.52.) "It is not only perilous " , Luther says , in one of those extravagant utterances , but also horrible to think of God without Christ. For besides that Satan is then almost easily to oppress us with the brightness of God's majesty , there is also great danger even in this , that God will not be so comprehended or found". (Commentary on Psalms of Degrees. p.199.)

In a word , the general principle involved is this : that any view of prayer which stresses man's desires (or even needs) more than the 'honour of God' is unacceptable to Luther. Prayer and 'Gloria Dei' (vide chap.IX) are inseparable in Luther's mind. To honour God is the fundamental requirement of true religion ; and one does this , in prayer , by praying 'through Christ'. Indeed , Luther has no hesitation in carrying this principle to its logical conclusion , i.e. judging the refusal to pray in Christ's name to be sin. It is quite possible for two men to make the same requests in prayer - the one prayer to be acceptable and the other not so , solely on the basis of this true 'honouring of God'. Luther declares : "A man honours God , and calls upon Him , to the end he may expect comfort , help, and all good from Him. Now if this same honour and calling upon God be done according to God's Word - that is , when a man expects from Him all graces for the sake of His promises made unto us in Christ , then he honours the true and living and everlasting God". (Table Talk. p.69).

Luther's treatment of this theme is by no means on a theoretical level only. Here, as elsewhere, his dogmatic theology is but a token of his profound desire to make known to his contemporaries the practical piety which he has made his own - a piety rich with truths which contemporary Romanism had so long obscured. For Luther does not 'prescribe' prayer 'through Christ' merely because this alone gives honour to God ; there is an intensely practical benefit for man , i.e. the assurance of God's graciousness to him. This cannot , Luther insists , be found by diligent search on the part of man ; it is revealed only in Christ.

Prayer without the Word , in fact , could be productive of nothing but despair and the worse kind of introspective piety. "It is indeed a great and glorious comfort . . . that we know and believe that Christ our High-priest sits on the right hand of God , praying and meditating for us without ceasing . . . What a crafty and mighty spirit the devil must be who can . . . with his fiery darts draw the hearts of good and godly people from this excelling comfort , and make them entertain other cogitations of Christ that He is not their High-priest , but complains of them to God ; that He is not the bishop of their souls , but a stern and angry Judge". (Table Talk. p.82.)

In the Commentary on Galatians , Luther further says : " So

long as He (Christ) is at the right hand of God making intercession for us, we cannot doubt of the grace and favour of God towards us". (p.343.) Luther is always very concerned to stress the inheritance of certainty which comes with belief in Christ. To be sure of God's grace means to be sure of His answer to prayer. Faith in prayer is the outcome of faith in the Word, Christ. Certainly the Christian ending to prayers, i.e. 'through Jesus Christ our Lord', is no mere magical formula. Luther did not hold with the idea that there is a particular efficacy in a name - 'Christ', or any other name. "It is not the name of God, but faith in the name of God, that does all things; nor is one name more efficacious than another". (Select Works. Vol.3. p.274. - Comm. on 1st 22 Psalms -). (Luther is actually making his point in connection with the 'Tetragrammaton', the four-lettered name of God, as in the Old Testament; but the principle involved applies equally well to the name of Christ).

However, while no one name 'is more efficacious than another', faith in Christ the Word is the only channel of approach to God in prayer which Luther will acknowledge. "There is no way of access whatever to the Father, nor any believing in Him, neither by learning, nor by works, nor by human reason, nor by any creature wither in heaven or in earth; but that Jesus Christ only is the 'way' by which we come unto the Father; and that way is found by believing in the name of Christ. . .". (Select Works: Vol.2. p.369.)

Heiler has justly remarked: "Die christozentrische Position ist von niemand kraftvoller und schärfer vertreten worden wie von Luther". (Das Gebet. p. 264. - "No one has presented the Christo-centric emphasis more forcibly or sharply than Luther".) And nowhere is this 'Christo-centric position' more forcibly illustrated than in Luther's doctrine of Prayer and the Word. "Ich soll und will von keinem anderen Gott wissen denn in meinem Herrn Christo". (Erlangen. 20 I, 162.) Nowhere does Luther substantiate this claim ('to know no God except Him Who is revealed in Christ') better than in his own doctrine and practice of prayer through Christ the Word.

A particularly interesting aspect of the subject of Prayer and the Word - and one which exemplifies the principles already established - is Luther's treatment of Old Testament prayer in relation to the New Testament revelation of God in the Word, Christ. Christ the 'Word' so fills the Old as well as the New Testament, that Luther can, for instance, claim that the people of the Old Testament did in fact pray to Christ Who was 'included in the promise': "But now that Sion is destroyed and gone, the treasure is opened, that is to say, Christ, Who then was hid in the promise as under a veil". (Comm. on Psalms of Degrees. p.199.)

Luther explains that "when the Old Testament people prayed unto God . . . they did it according to the form and manner whereby God revealed Himself in His Word and promises". (ibid. p. 223.) This, for Luther, is always the case, even when it appears that God is being addressed directly. He can indeed formulate the general 'rule' for Old Testament prayers thus: "This is a general rule to be observed in the Psalms and the whole scriptures . . . that all prayers were made unto God sitting between the cherubims. Now, when this temple was destroyed, God set up another temple" - namely, Christ. (ibid. p.224.)

Old Testament prayers , Luther insists , are addressed to the God clothed and revealed in His Word , and in His promises. The mere fact that the name 'Christ' is not to be found in the Old Testament does not invalidate Luther's thesis . Even where God is directly addressed in prayer , those who pray are not addressing (as do the Papists - according to Luther) an Absolute God , but a God who has revealed His nature , mediated that nature , through His Word and promises. Luther's comment on the first verse of Psalm 51 sums up this particular point : "An observation must be made upon David's addressing God , and making no mention of Christ , lest you should imagine that David addresses God as a Mahometan , or any other of the Gentiles would do. David is here addressing the God of his fathers as a promising God". (Select Works. Vol.1. p.66.)

The distinction between the prayer-attitude of Old Testament people and contemporary Romanism is vividly brought out by Luther when he writes : "The people of Israel did not view God as an Absolute God (so to speak) in the same way as the ignorant herd of monks ascend into heaven in their speculative imaginations , and view God as absolute . . . (but) David addresses God as clothed and revealed in His Word and promises , that Christ might not be excluded from the name God. This therefore is the reason why the prophets so lean upon the promises of God in their prayers ; because the promises include Christ , and render God not our Judge , nor our enemy, but a kind and favouring God , whose will is to restore the condemned unto life . . .". (ibid. p.66f).

It matters little to Luther , moreover , whether we are considering the Pope's decrees centuries after the birth of Christ , or Moses' law given centuries before His birth ; he can still insist that "without Christ all is idolatry and fictitious imaginings of God". God's commands , and His promises , are to be apprehended at all times. His Word contains both. And that same Word 'contains' - indeed , is - Christ. Whether we are thinking of Old or New Testament times , Romanism or Protestantism , it is for Luther equally true that "God will not hear our prayers , but in our mercy-seat Christ". (Comm.on Psalms of Degrees. p.228.)

Although Christ "is our true mercy-seat , whereof the mercy-seat of the Old Testament was but a shadow or figure" (ibid. p.197) , nevertheless the Old Testament mercy-seat was still a place where the Word was to be found , and where prayer was rightly made. This was God's will. God declared specifically in the Old Testament , Luther claims , (as in the New) the place where He would be heard. "We must think of no other God than Christ. That God which speaks not out of Christ's mouth is not God. God in the Old Testament bound Himself to the throne of grace ; there was the place where He would hear , so long as the policy and government of Moses stood and flourished . In like manner , He will still hear no man or human creature , but only through Christ". (Table Talk. p.78.)

All this , to Luther , is no mere theorising. It has the most practical application for the devotional life. "The reason why God appoints a certain place where He must be worshipped is that there is less danger of Satan deceiving men , and making them think they are worshipping God , when they are really worshipping Satan himself". (Comm.on Psalms of Degrees. p. 275.) It was precisely because contemporary Romanism had allowed itself

to be 'deceived' that Luther so strongly proclaimed his doctrine of Prayer and the Word, and so jealously guarded the principle of the sole Mediatorship of Christ.

This principle certainly did not occupy a prominent position in Romanist theology; hence Luther's antagonism to the prevailing practice of invocation to the saints - which can now be briefly considered (further treated under 'Intercession'). In view of the foregoing observations, it is hardly surprising that we should find Luther writing: "There is no way to be sought by invocation of saints or any other kind of worship or works, but by Christ and in Christ alone . . ." (Comm. on Ps. of D. p. 198.) "The invocation of saints is a most abominable blindness and heresy". ('Table Talk'. p. 73.)

One writer has judged that Roman Catholicism "grafted the polytheism of the ancient world on Christian monotheism by substituting the saints for the old gods in the superstitious reverence of the people". (J. Mackinnon. op.cit. Vol.4. p.246.) And Luther would appear to agree with this judgment: "The Papists took the invocation of the saints from the heathen, who divided God into numberless images and idols, and ordained to each its particular office and work". ('Table Talk'. p. 73.) It is, however, doubtful if this is historically true. Luther's own statement, certainly, must be viewed with caution, particularly since, but for the obvious abuses in Roman practice, his distinctively Protestant teaching might have taken considerably longer to crystallise.

We shall have occasion to note how regretful Luther was to abandon his own practice of invocation of saints; yet, for all the help which the Bible and other evangelical influences gave him, it is at least doubtful if he would have abandoned it, and if his views would have become go anti-Catholic without the glaring abuses which he noticed within the contemporary Church. He has observed, for example, that it certainly was not on purely doctrinal grounds that Romanism retained the practice of invocation of saints. "The Papist will not give it up, for the calling on dead saints brings him infinite sums of money and riches, far more than he got from the living". ('Table Talk'. p. 73.)

Not even a Council of the Church could convince Luther that prayers to saints were legitimate. Richard and Painter mention that the "Council of Trent decreed in its 25th session that all bishops and pastors should teach that 'the saints who reign together with Christ offer up their prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them and have recourse to their prayers and help for obtaining benefits from God . . . But that they think impiously who deny that saints . . . are to be invoked, or who assert either that they do not pray for men, or that the invocation of them to pray for each of us is idolatry, or that it is repugnant to the Word of God'". ('Christian Worship'. p.117.)

Luther frankly did believe it 'repugnant to the Word of God'. He would endorse the comment regarding the 'legends which the Roman Church substitutes in the place of the Word of God'. "Hence also the prayers which she (the Church) offers to her saints, that is, to herself". (ibid) Luther's conception of the Church was not one which included the idea of the prayers of the visible Church being directed to those within the Church invisible. He considered that a vast gulf separated even the

greatest saint from the Word Himself, Jesus Christ. The Word was supreme. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me". . . "There is no way (of coming to God in prayer) to be sought by the invocation of saints, . . . but by Christ and in Christ alone, according to that saying 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you'." (Comm. on Psalms of Degrees p. 198).

As Heiler has pointed out, in excusably extravagant language: "Nowhere is the primitive belief in the Mediatorship of Christ so clearly revealed as in public prayer. He is not the object of praise and thanksgiving. He is not the Hearer of prayers . . . Jesus is the Intercessor. . . who presents the people's intercessions to the Father". ('Prayer'. p.344.) This is also Luther's stress. For him, it is through the Word (not 'Scripture', but the 'Incarnate Word') that prayer is rightly offered. Luther never stresses the divinity of Christ 'at the expense of' His office as a Mediator and vice versa. He conserves both truths; as, for instance, in his Commentary on the Psalms of Degrees. "In Christ dwelleth the godhead corporally. Therefore when we pray unto God, we desire to be heard in the name of Christ, and for Christ's sake. . . like as by the example of the old primitive Church, public prayers are all finished with this clause, 'Through Christ our Lord'." (p. 197.)

In contemporary practice, prayers did not always finish with the clause - in word, or in effect. Men did genuinely believe that certain saints had this power which belongs (so Luther insisted) to the divine Mediator alone. Hence Luther's almost tireless proclamation that, "because no man must think to draw near to God or obtain grace of Him without this Mediator, High Priest, and Advocate . . . it follows that . . . all deserts of saints are quite rejected and condemned, so that through them no human creature can be justified before God". (ibid. p.84.)

In fact, the fundamental error against which Luther so vehemently protested, was the widespread belief that it was necessary to 'get round' God; and that this could be done (indeed, should be done) by praying to some saint who would then 'prevail' with God. But even when Christ was prayed to, as Mediator, there was at least the tendency for the protagonists of Rome to regard Him as being different in nature from God. This was a further problem which Luther recognised - every bit as serious a problem as the former one. Whether this ascribing a different nature to Christ was official Catholic dogma or not, is comparatively unimportant; the point is that it was popular belief, and it seems difficult to imagine where such a belief could have arisen except as a result of encouragement from the 'Mother Church'.

Luther, of course, rejected this latter idea as strongly as he rejected the general practice of invocation of saints. He refused to think of Christ the Word as if He were more easily approached than God the Word. He refused to believe that God was reluctant to hear prayers which were rightly offered, or that the deliberate 'pressure' of Christ's intercession must be brought to bear in order to obtain a favourable hearing. A section of his Commentary on Galatians is significantly entitled: ~~XXXX~~ "Christ is God by nature". (p.17).

Luther makes it perfectly clear that prayer to Christ is the same, in effect, as prayer to God. "Let us be assured that when we behold and hear and call upon Christ, we behold, hear, call upon, the Father also". (Comm. on the 2nd Psalm: Select Works. Vol.4. p.508). Luther was well aware of the fact so finely brought out by Heiler, that in the primitive Church prayers are not addressed to Christ directly, but through Him to the Father. He was aware that Augustine knew only prayer to God through Christ and thereby was in harmony with the earliest liturgical tradition. But, for Luther, that does not mean that prayer is wrongly made direct to Christ.

This latter certainly was a practice which had become prominent in the Middle Ages (in 'popular' devotion, at least); and Luther could find no reason for objecting to the practice. The explanation (if one be needed of his ready acceptance of it is quite simply found in Luther's rigidly Trinitarian faith. "If thou shouldst offer up a prayer, and shouldst direct thy petitions unto Christ in such a form as this - 'I call on Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou One only eternal and living God, the Creator and Father of us all' - thou wouldest have no cause to fear that thou shouldst give offence either to the Father or to the Holy Ghost, as having taken anything from the one or the other which was His own; but thou mightest rest fully satisfied and assured that thy prayer was approved of God, and that the whole godhead acknowledged it and gave testimony unto it; and that, on which one soever of the Three Persons thou mightest have called, thou there by callest on all the Persons, and so callest upon the one God. For no one of the Persons can be addressed without, apart from, or separately and dividedly from, the rest...". (Last Words of David. Select Works. Vol.2. p. 264.)

Not only in popular devotion, of course, did such Christologic prayer have firm roots; for there were evidences of it too in liturgical services - ever since the earliest example in liturgical prayer (of direct address to Jesus) in the 'Gloria in excelsis': "O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, . . . have mercy upon us". Again, we find no protest from Luther at the existence of such prayer.

And yet, we must return to the conclusion reached earlier, as to Luther's normal practice, and as to what he himself advocated in this matter of addressing the Deity in prayer. ". . . in order to retain the simplicity and propriety of the doctrine concerning the distinction of Persons, and to follow the example of the Apostolic form, and of the general custom of the Church, . . . it is more convenient to follow and retain that order or series wherein the Persons of the Godhead are mentioned; and, whenever we would offer up our prayers . . . to mention first by name the Person of the Father . . . because such Person is, as it were, the fountain-spring and fountain-head of the divinity (if I may use such terms) of the Son and of the Holy Ghost". (Select Works. Vol.2. p.264).

Prayer to God the Word through Christ the Word was one of the most valuable principles of devotion conserved by Martin Luther. It seems impossible to doubt that, for him, 'Christ the Word' was not only a religious necessity, but a psychological necessity as well. (c.f. "When Christ the sole Mediator was removed and gotten out of the way, those armies of mediators and intercessors came into His place" - Letter to Chapter of All Saints Church, Wittenberg, 1523.) Prayer through Christ the Word, in

fact , was not only doctrinally sound ; it was also 'expedient'. Such a practice was not only the divine will for men , but also the only practical guarantee that the genuine religious relationship would be maintained. Without Christ the Word there could be no true prayer. Without prayer there could be no true relationship between God and man. And that , in the last analysis , is the essential principle which Luther fought to conserve. 'Christ the Word' was , for him , no theological abstraction ; it was the indispensable basis of true Christian devotion.

(2). The Written Word.

For Luther , the world of prayer was the world of the Bible. He insisted on this dual truth : that the life of prayer cannot be lived unless it is fed upon the Bible , and that the Bible cannot be properly understood except in the context of prayer . A study of his own prayers clearly shows how much Luther owed both to the form and language of the Bible. (vide Chap. VII f.)

Yet it is important to realise that , for all his undoubted emphasis upon , and adherence to , the written Word , the authority of that Word was definitely secondary. Any authority which the Bible possessed was derivative from the Living Word - Christ. Without that Word there is no Scripture . If the early years of Protestantism saw that fact neglected or under-stressed (as undoubtedly they did) , we are not justified in attributing such neglect or under-emphasis to Luther. "It is often said that for an infallible Church the Reformation substituted an infallible Book. It has to be admitted that that came pretty near the truth , but it is not true of the Fathers of the Reformation. The real Reformation principle is not that the Bible , but that the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture, is infallible ; and the believer trusts the written Word because the Holy Spirit speaks in his heart consonantly with the same Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture". (W.D.Niven : 'Reformation Principles'. p23.)

Luther is quite clearly distinguished from Mediaeval theologians as well as the Mediaeval sectaries ; for , whereas they , in thinking of the 'Word of God' , thought primarily of the letter , of the doctrines taught , or of the written promises of the Bible , he thought of what constituted the core of the Word. When he speaks of this core as being the 'gospel according to the pure understanding' , or the 'pure Word of God' , or the 'promises of God' , or as being 'Jesus Christ' , he is using expressions which he frankly takes to be identical.

Certainly we can refute any suggestion that Luther embraced the notion of 'verbal inspiration'. (His placing of Hebrews , James , Jude , and the Apocalypse on a 'lower plane of authority' is sufficient evidence , in itself , to disprove such an assertion). Dr. Mackinnon draws the same distinction drawn above by Dr. Niven , when he says (with regard to the present point) : "The theory of the verbal inspiration of Scripture is a product not of Luther , but of the later Lutheran orthodoxy". (op. cit. Vol. 4. p.302.)

Luther did not, in fact, miss the essential point that 'God's Word', in the usage of the Bible itself, always means God's personal speaking to man. The written Word, by confronting us with Christ the Word, can spring into life and become one of the means by which He, the Word of God, comes to us. It is this knowledge of God's personal speaking to us which is the mainspring of the life of prayer. In this light we are to interpret Luther's own well-known dictum: 'Orare est studisse'. For he maintained that it was as man reads (the Bible) that he is plunged into a direct relationship with God, so leaving the way open for prayer. For the Scriptures tell us that God "has set up another temple (Christ) in which alone we are to offer prayer". (c.f. Comm. on Ps. of Degrees. p. 224.)

In the Bible Luther found the conditions upon which man can approach God. Apart from that written Word, prayer is always in danger of being directed away from the true God, and of becoming self-centred or idolatrous. This Luther believed to have happened in much of contemporary religion. "When a man will serve God . . he must look whether God has commanded it or no". (Table Talk. p. 72.) That, to him, was almost as important as making sure that there is a particular 'promise' attached to the proposed activity. Luther did not agree with the common view that prayer is best regarded as something arising out of man's own need. Ideally, prayer should arise more out of God's Word than out of our own personal needs (and this should perhaps be remembered when reading the Chapter on 'Petition'). For Luther, prayer 'in Christ's name' is prayer inspired by His first interest, the Gospel - the Gospel which is itself constituted by Christ, Who is Himself the Word.

Luther's objection was largely directed against any suggestion that something 'subjective' could be the basis for true prayer. Certainly he found nothing intrinsically wrong, nothing irreligious or unevangelical, in the idea of 'progressive revelation' in accordance with the intellectual development and religious experience of the Christian. But he did see the danger in self-deception and extravagant fancy which was clearly a feature of (for example) the piety of Münzer and the 'Prophets'. One writer has categorically stated that Luther rejected the views of Thomas Münzer (one of the Zwickau prophets) who had "discarded the Lutheran doctrine of the supreme authority of the written Word for that of the direct inspiration of the believer in communion with God". (J. Mackinnon: op.cit. Vol. 3. p. 182.) And the same writer has elsewhere pointed out that it was precisely "by his appeal to the written Word that Luther vainly strove to stem the subjective aspect of the Reformation movement". (ibid. p. 101.)

This, of course, is not to deny that Luther himself is rightly to be criticised for a certain measure of 'subjectivism'. But the essential point stands: Luther's apprehension of the Word was his starting-point not only for formal doctrine, but also for the devotional life (e.g. 'The Scripture setteth forth Christ not as a Judge, a Tempter, an Accuser, but a Reconciler, a Mediator, a Comforter, and a throne of grace' - Comm. on Gal. p. 166.) Köstlin has declared that "the first firm ground for his convictions and inner life, and the foundation for all his later teachings and works, was found by Luther in his own persevering study of Holy Writ". (Life of Luther. p. 53) It was this study which

gradually revealed to him the light which determined his future convictions." (ibid. p. 55.)

In particular, Luther believed that the most mature type of prayer was impossible without an understanding of the Word of Promise, as set forth in the Scriptures. Without that Word, prayer is 'unstable'. Regarding Psalm 86, for instance, Luther says: "Behold what an example of prayer for us to follow. . . We ought also to apprehend the Word of the divine promise of mercy, and cast out of our hearts all doubt, that we may be enabled to call upon Him without misgiving". (Man. of Bk. of Ps. p. 224.)

Luther's interest in the written Word is indeed "mainly the religious interest". (J. Mackinnon: op.cit. Vol. 4. p. 293.) The revelation of a Word of Promise is the only true foundation for prayer in Luther's view. "There is", he says, "nothing more precious in the whole Scripture than the promise of God; for, if there were no promise, there would be no place or ground. . . for prayer". (Comm. on 1st 22 Ps.: Sel. Works. Vol. 4. p. 16.) The same conviction is expressed in his Commentary on the Psalms of Degrees: "The promises are the chiefest part of Scripture". (p. 269.) Again: the Christian's responsibility, and privilege, is to "rest in the Word and the promise". (ibid. p. 35.)

This Word, be it repeated, was for Luther not an abstract doctrine, but a dynamic revelation. The written Word was always to be regarded as a witness to the living Word, Christ. The living Word was the 'final authority'. An apprehension of anything less than that meant (as in Romanism) something less than a true practice of prayer. It is interesting, however, to note that Luther does acknowledge a form of 'secondary authority' which lies behind the written Word, i.e. the religious 'geniuses' who were responsible (speaking humanly) for the form in which the written Word is presented to men. "Even behind the written Word by which Luther swears", Heiler declares, "there stands the personal authority of the Biblical men of genius who are the bearers of God's historical revelation". ('Prayer', p. 154.) This authority, however, is something quite different from the Roman Church 'Tradition' which Luther regarded as a legal phenomenon, and whose 'authority' was quite invalid except for the most peripheral matters. The authority which he acknowledges is purely 'religious': a self-authenticating, devotional authority.

Luther's acknowledgement of this subsidiary authority lying behind the Bible is another piece of evidence, incidentally, which serves to refute the idea that Luther regarded the written Word as the Word of God. As has been well said: "The view many of us hold, that the Scriptures contain the Word of God, rather than that Scripture in every statement in all its books is the Word of God. . . is really a return to the original Reformation position, as, for example, T.M. Lindsay convincingly maintained". (W.D. Nivens: op.cit. p. 29f.)

Hence, Luther's rigid principle that there is no knowledge of the Word (Christ) without the Word (the Bible) is not to be taken to mean that the Bible is the Word. Luther can say not only that, "as for myself,

when I am without the Word , or do not remember it , or am not speaking from it , I find Christ nowhere , and have lost all my devotion and spiritual mind too" ; but also that "As soon as ever I propose to myself any one of the Psalms or any sentence of the Scripture , then by its light my heart is quickened , and immediately another mind and another feeling are begotten in me". (Select Works. Vol.2. p.7.) In other words , his 'devotion and spiritual mind' (Prayer) is exclusively the outcome of the light which comes from the written Word.

In consequence of such belief , and such experience on Luther's part , we can find in the 'Kirchenordnung' (Church Ordinance) drawn up in connection with the organisation of the Evangelical Church , that in the matter of worship , the people are to "hear the Word of God read , followed by the Lord's Prayer". For Luther , prayer must arise naturally out of the written Word. Dr. Mackinnon has justly observed that "For Luther , the Bible , not the Church nor the Sacraments apart from the Word , is the grand and sovereign medium of salvation. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit , and through it the Spirit , in the first instance , operates on the heart and conscience" ; and he quotes Luther in support of his statement ; e.g. 'The Word is the bridge , the narrow way (sonita) by which the Holy Spirit comes to us' - 'It is in and through the Word that the Spirit comes and gives faith to whomsoever He will'. (op.cit. Vol. 4. p. 296).

The importance of the written Word for devotion is further illustrated in the emphasis which the Reformers as a whole , and Luther in particular , placed upon what they called the 'abbreviated Word'. This 'abbreviated Word' , i.e. the Catechism , had an authority for the Reformers only second to the Bible. Its function , like that of the Bible itself , was to fit people not only for participation in the Sacraments , but for prayer according to the Word. Its aim was devotional. It was one of the several 'instruments' by which prayer , the acknowledged chief element in devotion , could be enriched. "The Reformers recognised the importance of this kind of instruction (i.e. catechetical) , and gave it a new and specific development. For them , everything depended on the apprehension of the Word of God , and therefore also on this catechetical instruction which contained the 'abbreviated Word'." (J. Mackinnon - quoting Albrecht - op.cit. Vol.4. p. 321.) Nothing , to Luther , depended more on the 'apprehension of the Word of God' than prayer.

Luther could trace the poverty of prayer-life in contemporary Romanism not only to the small place accorded to the spoken Word , but also to the fact that the written Word was not widely read. Every aspect of the religious life must be conditioned by the Word of God - or else it must be sub-Christian. These were the only two possibilities. "God will be heard prayed unto according to His Word , and not according to our imaginations". (Select Works. Vol.4. p.27 .)

One of Luther's main services to Protestantism lies in this : his strenuous repudiation of the notion that prayer can be independent of the written Word. This notion , far from being the sign of a much higher piety , is actually the sign of a considerably lower one. The Bible was given to man not just to be a historical record of something that happened , but to be one of the chief impetuses for a Christian's personal contact with the Word which lay behind the written Word. This 'personal contact' is nothing

less than prayer.

The Bible , to Luther , did not set out merely a series of conditions upon which God could be approached ; it actually offered man , in 'veiled form' , an experience of the Word Himself , Who imparted what authority the written Word enjoyed. The Bible was not only the material for prayer , but the efficient cause of prayer. Without the written Word , not only the language of prayer was deficient , but also its spirit. Indeed , it is as true , for Luther , to say that 'without Scripture there is no living prayer' , as it is to say that 'without the living Word there is no Scripture'.

(3). The Spoken Word.

"The creaturely words , whether written or spoken , are for Luther the vehicle of the divine creative Word by which God addresses Himself directly and personally to us". (P.Watson: op.cit. p.152.) This statement will serve to remind us , as we undertake the third and final sub-section of this chapter , that ultimately no division of the 'Word' is possible. It is the same Word with which we have to do , whether considered with reference to the Person of Christ , or the Bible , or Preaching.

The link between Christ the Word and the spoken Word is not far to seek , as far as the subject of prayer is concerned; for , Luther clearly regarded prayer to be false , and inadequately founded , unless it was preceded by a proclamation of the nature and benefits of Christ the Word . Luther regarded this proclamation as the very essence of Christian preaching. He did not , however , regard the merely historical presentation of Christ as Christian preaching. No doubt it would lead to knowledge ; but not to prayer. Still less is this 'proclamation' a mere exposition of abstract doctrine. "To me it is not simply an old song of an event that happened 1500 years ago ; it is something more than an event that happened once - for it is a gift and bestowing that endures for ever". (Erlangen: xx.1.114) Luther knows nothing of a distinction between the Gospel of Christ , and the Gospel about Christ.

As has been wisely noted : "If the Gospel as it is preached were only an announcement , or a making salvation possible , according to Luther it would be a law ; but it is neither the one nor the other , but something much higher , because it is quite immeasurable with law ; that is to say , it is redemption itself. Luther never reflected on the 'gospel in itself' , . . a heathenish reflection , but he kept in view the Gospel together with its effect , and only in this effect was it for him the Gospel". (A.Harnack : History of Dogma. Vol.7. p.204.) This typically dynamic view of revelation is , almost of necessity , intimately linked with Luther's view of prayer as communion with a living Lord.

As has been stressed , the principal part of prayer , for Luther , is not man addressing God , but God addressing man. To hear God rightly is the first and biggest step in prayer. Hence , in the spoken Word - preaching - our primary aim is to listen to God , not the person who happens to be speaking vocally at the moment. Luther regarded preachers as 'larvae Dei' , and we are to have regard to them far less than to "Christ

speaking in them , and the Word which they bring and preach unto us". And, since Christ the Word is the utterance of God's own heart , "When thou hearest the Word , then thou hearest God". (c.f. Weimar ed. XXXVII. 136.)

This is the fact which is constitutive of a true prayer-relationship. In Luther's view , if the Word did not prompt a man to pray , it was simply because that 'Word' was not recognised as God's Word at all. The spoken Word - preaching - was given with the specific aim of encouraging and stimulating prayer. And one of the basic ways in which it accomplishes that aim is by way of reminding men what is the real nature of the God to Whom they are to pray. "The Gospel is that Word whereby God discloses His inmost heart , manifesting Himself a gracious God , Who wills to deal with us not as an angry Judge , but as a merciful Father. Inasmuch as we believe this Word , accepting it not merely as an abstract doctrine , but as addressed by God Himself quite personally to us , we enter into quite a new relationship with God". (P.Watson. op.cit. p.157.)

Not only so ; we also enter into our true humanity. For Luther, man is only man 'in virtue of the claim made on him by God' (as Dr. Brunner has reminded us in the present generation. - 'Divine Imperative'. p.66) . The same modern writer puts Luther's view - though not specifically seeking to do so - when he says : "We are what we hear from God. We are men and have our existence as men through the Word of God which addresses us and calls us into existence". (God and Man. p. 114.) To Luther this proper 'doctrine of man' is little less important than a proper 'doctrine of God', where prayer (among other things) is concerned. Though secondary in importance, man's identity is the second vital factor in determining what and how he prays.

Because man's response to God in prayer necessarily depended upon the approach which God makes to man in revelation , Luther naturally desired to declare the historic facts of that revelation in the living Word, Christ. And he further believed that the 'placarding' of the passion and resurrection of Christ would constitute the most irresistible of all incentives to fellowship with God in prayer. That had been his own experience. Christ the Word , by dying for men , inclined men's hearts to pray , because that Death revealed a Love in which men could implicitly confide. The greater part of his contemporaries could not so 'confide' , because that Death had not been preached with conviction to them.

"The principal and indeed the whole foundation and truth of godliness lies in the pure teaching and hearing of the Word of God. For where the Word is purely taught and heard , there , to a certainty , will be begotten pure and prevailing prayer". (Manual of Book of Psalms. p.325.) This fundamental thought of Luther meets us frequently in his writings . Prevailing prayer is always the outcome of the 'prevailing Word'. "A good prayer" , he declares , "ought to follow a good sermon or discourse ; that is , that after the Word is sown among the people , we are to groan and humbly beg of God that the Word might be effectual and might bring forth fruit". (Select Works. Vol.2. p.5.) Luther could not have found much approval for the widespread practice in the modern Church , whereby divine worship is speedily brought to a conclusion by the singing of a hymn and the pronouncement of the Benediction immediately after the sermon.

No one of the Reformers emphasised the importance of preaching, the 'spoken word', more than Luther. Indeed, he recovered for Protestantism that importance which was attached to it in the early Church. Nevertheless, preaching was not the climax of divine worship. The relation between the spoken word and prayer might summarily be stated thus: Preaching results in the hearing of the Word; hearing the Word begets belief in the Word; belief in the Word leads to prayer (c.f. Romans x. 14.) Prayer, in fact, rests upon a credal basis of faith in a gracious Word spoken first by God, and then by those who have already apprehended it (preachers). "Prayer's the end of preaching". (G. Herbert: "The Church Porch".)

Heiler has authoritatively stated that, "Der innere Zusammenhang von Predigt und Gemeindebet wird sehr treffend von Luther hervorgehoben". ('Das Gebet'. p. 433. - 'The basic connection between preaching and public prayer has been finely brought out by Luther'.) We find, for example, this comment by Luther in his Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, re Matt. v. 7 - 11: Christ means hereby to teach that "prayer next to preaching is the principal work of a Christian, as something always belonging to a sermon . . . that God may give His grace and Spirit, that the Gospel may become efficient and be in constant use". (p. 393.)

Again, in his Commentary on Genesis, Luther categorically declares that "It is impossible to pray if the people are not first of all instructed; indeed, no one will be able to pray properly for himself, unless he has first set forth the faith; and through such a 'setting forth' which he effects for himself the heart is stirred up and roused to engage in prayer . . . so that preaching (the sermon) and prayer are always found together". ('Erklär. der Gen. xiii. 4.)

Almost needless to say, Luther's doctrine of the spoken Word and prayer became so clearly defined as a result of his strenuous opposition to the situation as he found it in contemporary Romanism. This is the case, as we have noted, with most aspects of his distinctive teaching. In this particular matter, the reprehensible abuse in Luther's view was the unwarranted separation of preaching and worship which had taken place in the Roman Catholic Church. In his 'Order of Divine Worship in the Congregation' (1523), Luther points out the absence of preaching as one of the three great abuses in the Roman Church, and declares that "The Christian congregation should never assemble except the Word of God be preached".

It was precisely because "at Rome preaching and prayer are simply despised" that Luther "provided a new liturgy centred not on the mass, as hitherto, but on the sermon". (B.L. Woolf: trans. of 'Reform. Writings of M.L.' Vol.1. p. 143 & p.20.) To Luther, it was no accident that both preaching and prayer were not given a central place in the Roman devotional scheme. The two are inseparably connected; and no unbiassed reader can resist the conclusion that, in contemporary Romanism, they did not have the place which they held in New Testament times. Simply because the 'work of man' was nothing compared with the Word of

God, Luther felt justified in replacing the prominence of the mass by the prominence of the sermon - the spoken Word. The mass made prayer well-nigh non-essential; the sermon made prayer its natural complement.

Luther clearly states his belief that the mass (Communion) itself is not complete without the preaching of the Word. His view is that "the mass is by institution a communion and commemoration which ought to be accompanied by the preaching of the Word, and celebrated publicly in the presence of the congregation". (J. Mackinnon: op.cit. Vol.3. p. 39.) Both prayer and sacrament are incomplete - indeed, impossible - without the Word in one or more of its manifestations. "What is contemplated in (any) public divine service can in no way be different from this: the building up of faith through proclamation of the divine Word, and the offering in prayer of the common sacrifice of praise". (A. Harnack: op.cit. Vol. VII. p. 221f.)

Luther had come to the conclusion that, for contemporary Romanism, "the spiritual life was sustained not by the ethical efficacy of the Word and Spirit, but by the magical efficacy of the ritual act, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper". (Richard and Painter: 'Christian Worship'. p. 63f.) Again, Luther probably overstated his case; but the importance of his own positive views cannot be overstressed. What was of primary import for him was this 'ethical influence of the Word'; for it was that which moved to prayer. No doubt "the Protestant Church, and especially the Lutheran Church, look upon the Word and Sacraments as the ordinary means of grace", though "the Word comes first, for without the Word the sacraments could be neither understood nor exist" (ibid. p. 23.) - but this 'Word', for Luther, was never merely a means of grace. It had a compelling ethical reference. And prayer was the evidence that this 'ethical quality' of the Word had been truly appropriated.

Luther's emphasis upon preaching arose out of his deep recognition that, until men become acquainted with the real character of the Word - and especially with the ethical challenge of the Word - they cannot use the language of filial piety towards God, which is prayer.

This prayer will, of course, be 'flexible', depending upon the particular aspect of the Gospel which is stressed in the spoken Word; but no genuine type of prayer could exist independent of the Word. Later chapters will illustrate how the type of prayer which takes place is dependent upon the precise aspect of the Word which is stressed at the moment in question. But the following observation can serve as an example of the principle involved; it concerns the prayer of confession. Dr. Mackinnon notes that in Luther's work on auricular confession, he is concerned to lay stress on the intimate connection between preaching and prayer. "The people should be drawn to confession (whether auricular or the private prayer) and communion by the preaching of the Gospel of faith and repentance, and not driven by ecclesiastical enactment". (op.cit. Vol.3. p. 15.) And similarly, each aspect of the Word has its corresponding and appropriate type of prayer, the latter being impossible without the 'impetus' of the former.

Luther never compromised his principle that prayer should arise out of preaching (despite all his 'leanings' towards a sacrament of penance). He resisted every suggestion that worship of any kind could be 'meritorious'. He insisted that, without the Word, worship tended to become not only meritorious in nature, but also exceedingly complex - which was a contradiction both of New Testament models, and of the Spirit of God. Hence, in face of this tendency in prayer (and worship generally), we find Luther laying the greatest possible emphasis in many of his sermons on the 'gospel according to Paul' - where he found the most pronounced contrast with contemporary worship. "It is . . . above all the gospel according to Paul which he expounds with such power and conviction in (many of) his sermons, in opposition to . . . the ecclesiasticism in religion which consists in the performance of prescribed works, such as . . . repeating prayers, . . . saying masses for souls in purgatory, etc." (ibid. p.65.)

For Luther, the 'gospel according to Paul' leads to prayer according to the mind of Christ. The 'gospel according to Rome' leads to prayer according to the mind of Anti-Christ. For preaching cannot be divorced from prayer. However much Luther may have overstated the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism, the essential contrast which looms large in all his writings is amply merited. For Protestantism, the spoken Word is central; for Romanism it is something less than central.

The exceedingly interesting observation of Dr. Mackinnon seems to be justified by the facts, that, for Luther, the spoken Word was to be valued as much, if not more than, the written Word. "God speaks to man through the preacher. In this conviction, he (Luther) rates preaching - the spoken Gospel - as high as the Bible - yea, at times, even higher, since it is the Word as experienced by the speaker, under the guidance of the Spirit, and applied by the Spirit to the heart and mind of his listener, that he preaches". (T.R. vi.340f. - quoted in Mack. op.cit. Vol.4. p.314)

Be this as it may, it is no coincidence that the same writer can declare, on the one hand, that "Luther's sermons mark an epoch in the history of preaching and that of evangelical religion"; and that Heiler can declare, on the other, that Luther's doctrine and practice of prayer is "the most important contribution made to the subject in the entire history of Christian prayer". (Mack. op.cit. Vol.4. p.308; & Heiler. op.cit. p. 130. 'Prayer'.)

CHAPTER III. PRAYER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Linked most intimately with Luther's doctrine of Prayer and the Word is his doctrine of Prayer and the Holy Spirit. Strictly speaking, they are not separate doctrines at all; the one is the complement of the other. As Harnack has pointed out: "From the fixed and exclusive aspect in which Luther set before him God, Christ, the Holy Spirit . . . , he came to see that the Holy Spirit is bound to the Word of God, i.e. that the Spirit and the Word of God have an inseparable and exclusive relation to each other". (Hist. of Dogma. Vol.VII. p.249).

It has already been insisted that, for Luther, prayer is nothing - is impossible - without the Promise or Word which stands behind it. Now we can note that Luther is equally concerned to declare his belief that we can have no real assurance (in prayer) that the promise of the Gospel is the Word of the living God to us, unless the Holy Spirit says in our heart 'That is God's Word'. No more is genuine prayer possible without the Word, than it is without the action of the Holy Spirit. "I believe that . . . apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit, no one can come to God. . . Through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son rouse, call, and draw us". (B.L.Woolf. op.cit. Vol.I. p.87 - Luther's Expos. of the Creed).

Luther's insistence that the Holy Spirit acts only through, and in conjunction with, the Word, was, of course, in sharp contrast to the claims of contemporary Romanism. Luther never did deny that the Holy Spirit also employs, besides the Word, other 'marks' of the Church such as the sacraments; but for him the Word was the principal channel through which the Holy Spirit worked - not the sacraments. "He (the Holy Spirit) works in the hearts of whom He will, and how He will, but never without the Word". (Table Talk. p.107). "When, by the hearing of the external Word, we receive an inward fervency and light, whereby we are changed and become new creatures . . . this . . . is the gift and operation of the Holy Ghost, which cometh with the Word preached, which purifieth our hearts by faith, and bringeth forth in us spiritual motions". (Comm. on Galatians. p.340). Likewise in his later years, when he was making real efforts to strengthen the authority of the Ministry, Luther can say: "God wills to give the Holy Spirit to those only who receive it through the Word and Ministry" ('Predigant'). (W.A. 17, II, 135, 20).

Such statements by Luther are obviously made with the intention of refuting any contrary ideas to be found in the Roman theology. He rejected categorically the tendency of his day to encourage the belief that it was only in exceptional ways that grace was bestowed. He can declare, for instance, that "If any man suffer affliction with a constant and joyful heart, then hath the Holy Ghost done His office in him". (Comm. on Gal. p.349).

Not unfairly has it been said that, on the contrary, in the Roman system "The Spirit had little to do with men except in connection with the Sacraments. There He was thought of rather impersonally, in terms of divine energies which were more or less dissociated from God, although proceeding from Him. For Luther, the Spirit is the agent in all Christian life. Without the Spirit there can be no revelation. In general, it may be said that the stress upon the Spirit (in Luther) corresponds to

the prominence given to the personal character of Christian faith". (E.M. Carlsen: op.cit. p. 122.)

This marked contrast between the place of the Spirit in mediaeval theology and in Luther finds splendid expression in modern Swedish research on Luther. It is here, more than anywhere in modern theological writing, that we find attention drawn to the prominence of the Holy Spirit in Luther's theology. For Luther, the Holy Spirit is a living power, operative in every sphere of the Christian life, be it Prayer or the performing of one's daily work. Hence we find H.H. Kramm mentioning the "distrust felt in Lutheran theology of those ceremonies which seem to suggest that the Holy Spirit can be transferred by the will of man through episcopal consecration or confirmation". ('Theol. of M.L.' p.39)

As Dr. Mackinnon has pointed out: it is only after the Spirit has made His presence felt through God's Word that the Spirit can then operate in the Sacraments. (op.cit. p.297 - Vol.4.) The Holy Spirit certainly does work through the Sacraments, but Luther regards this as but a part - and a secondary part - of His total work. "The Holy Ghost", Luther declares, "has two offices; first, He is a Spirit of grace, that makes God gracious unto us . . . ; secondly, He is a Spirit of prayer, that prays for us, and for the whole world". ('Table Talk'. p. 106.)

These two functions of the Spirit look very like the 'work' which Reformation theology, and subsequent Protestant thought, have attributed to the Person of Christ. And, in point of fact, Luther does not hesitate to make the 'equation'. Such equation is really a restatement of the first sentence of this chapter ('linked most intimately with Luther's doctrine of Prayer and the Word is his doctrine of Prayer and the Holy Spirit'). For, as Luther saw it, the essential content of the Word was the Person of Christ. Thus we arrive at the principle of the 'coincidence of the work of the Holy Spirit and Christ, in prayer' - a principle which has been noted and praised by the Swedish scholar, Aulen. "There is a reciprocal relationship between Christ and the Spirit, so that Luther can assign much the same function to each". (qu. in E.M. Carlsen: op.cit. p. 122.)

In fact, the action of the Holy Spirit in prayer, and prayer offered truly in the name of Christ, are so closely linked that the former truth involves the latter, in Luther's view. Romanism, on the contrary, tended to separate the function of the Holy Spirit from that of the Incarnate and Glorified Lord (and the widespread practice of invocation of saints was merely one of several indications that this was so). Because this separation offered an imaginary basis for the revelation of new truths which were not already included, even in germ, in the Person and teaching of Christ Himself, Luther sought strenuously to insist on the coincidence of the Holy Spirit's and Christ's work.

Luther's works abound in such brief, pointed remarks as: "The Holy Spirit only . . . is able to say 'Jesus Christ is the Lord'. The Holy Ghost teaches, preaches, and declares Christ". ('Table Talk'. p.107) Again: "The Holy Ghost is called a witness 'because He bears witness

only of Christ ,and of none other'." (ibid. p.109) "Where Christ is , there is the Holy Spirit". (ibid. p.143.) "What the Third Person is , the holy evangelist St. John teaches , chapter xv , where he says : 'But when the Comforter is come , which I will send unto you from the Father , the Spirit of Truth which proceeds from the Father , He shall testify of Me'." (ibid. p.75).

In the true working of prayer , then , as far as Luther was concerned , the presence of the 'assisting Spirit' , and the presence of Christ (who maketh intercession for us) are coincident and inseparable . In Luther's view , it is the Holy Spirit Who enables a man so to acknowledge Christ as to fulfil the essential condition of praying in His name. "No man can say 'Jesus is Lord' , but in the Holy Spirit" (1Cor.xii.3). Because of this conviction , Luther can condemn an error just as grievous as that one which consists in attempting to 'canalise' the operation of the Spirit - namely , the opposite error of the mystics and sects , i.e. of seeking the Holy Spirit 'in His majesty'.

Luther writes : "No one should wait until the Holy Spirit addresses him personally in His majesty. For His testimony He brings to us publicly in the preaching of the Word ; there you must seek and await Him , until by the Word which you hear with your ears He touches your heart , and so also , by His working , inwardly testifies in your heart to Christ". (Erl. edit. 5 , 173). As Mackinnon has finely commented : "Luther . . knows nothing of the free inspiration of the mind and religious experience of the individual by the Spirit apart from the Word , as the Spirituals maintained. Against them he elaborated his distinctive doctrine of Spirit and Word". (op.cit. Vol.4. p.297).

It was , for instance , because of "the wild extremes of the Anabaptists in the Reformation era , in their separation of the Holy Spirit's work from the Church and the Word" , that Luther was brought " face to face with the danger of a false spiritualism and disintegration of the outward organism of the Church". (Richard & Painter. op.cit. p.343). He saw only one effective counter to such a situation - precisely the same counter which he used against the opposite tendency of Rome to 'canalise' the Spirit , i.e. his frankly dogmatic assertion of the coincidence of the work of the Holy Spirit and of Christ : not only in prayer , but in all aspects of practical piety.

There is a further conception , of primary importance for a true doctrine of prayer , which Luther developed in opposition to contemporary Romanism ; for , not only did Rome make an unjustifiable separation between the Holy Spirit and the Word , but it made a similar separation between the Holy Spirit and faith - a separation which Luther judged to have had the most serious effect upon men's prayers. For Luther , faith in prayer is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit . He speaks , for instance , of the Holy Spirit Who "kindles faith in the heart through the Word , and so regenerates us" . . .". (Table Talk. p.74). It is precisely when , through the outward preaching of the Word , and the inward witness of the Holy Spirit , faith is created , that the Promise associated with Prayer is fulfilled in the believer's heart .

As Dr. Plitt has justly remarked : "It had been constantly

taught by Luther that no person comes of himself to the faith which brings communion with God, and that no one can prepare himself for it, but that it is wrought alone by the power of God, through the Holy Ghost". (Christian Worship: Richard & Painter. p.149) (c.f. the Augsburg Confession "The Holy Spirit creates faith where and when it pleases God". : Article V.)

Luther's own words confirm Dr. Plitt's observation. In his Short Catechism Luther declares: "I believe that I cannot of my own understanding believe in, or come to, Jesus Christ my Lord, but that the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel . . . and sanctified me in the true faith". And again - we find this brief but significant digest of the contrast between the Roman view and that of Luther, in his Commentary on Psalm 121, where Luther states his conviction that: "Faith is not a dead affection or quality of the mind, as the Papists do dream, but a singular work and motion of the Holy Ghost". (Comm. on Psalms of Degrees. p.45.)

Luther enlarges on this idea, pointing out the dangers of the Roman view for practical devotion, in these terms: "This was a special principle and article of faith in the whole Papacy, whereby they utterly defaced the doctrine of faith, tormented men's consciences, banished Christ quite out of the Church, darkened and denied all the benefits of the Holy Ghost . . ." (Comm. on Gal. trans. Cole. p.342.) One way, in particular, in which the 'benefits of the Holy Ghost were denied', was in the Roman doctrine of man's necessary uncertainty with regard to the favour of God. For Luther, however, part of the Holy Ghost's function is to give this very certainty, without which no prayer (properly understood) is possible.

"If any man feel in himself", says Luther, "a love toward the Word of God, and willingly heareth, talketh, writeth, and thinketh of Christ, let that man know that this is not the work of man's will or reason, but the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . This I say to confute that pernicious doctrine of the Papists which taught that no man certainly knows . . . whether he be in the favour of God or no". (ibid. p.342). This insistence of Luther on the intimate connection between confidence in prayer and the working of the Holy Spirit is a dominant note of his devotional writings. (One further instance can be quoted from his Table Talk: "We do not separate the Holy Ghost from faith; neither do we teach that He is against faith; for He is the certainty itself . . . that makes us sure and certain of the Word". - p.106.)

It is, in fact, precisely so that "He might prompt us to prayer" that "the Holy Spirit is given to those who believe". (Select Wks. Vol.1. p.90f). "The Spirit", Luther dogmatically declares, "is not given except only in, with, and through faith in Jesus Christ, and faith comes not without God's Word". (Erl. ed. 63, 122.) All these terms so frequently on Luther's lips ('Holy Spirit', 'the Word', 'faith', 'Christ', etc.) might well appear to create a set of complex ideas, sometimes contradicting one another, sometimes failing to achieve an adequate coherence. For Luther, however, all these terms, and the rich ideas associated with them, are finally and indisputably unified in the humble Christian's experience of prayer. Luther's service, indeed, consisted largely in demonstrating to a groping, immature age, just how all these

terms could be fitted together and comprehended in the context of a living relationship with God. The Word has the same association with Prayer, as the Holy Spirit has with faith in the Word; the Word 'stands' behind all true prayer, just as the Holy Spirit 'stands' behind all true faith.

It is appropriate to mention at this point that Luther, for all his emphasis upon the Holy Spirit's work in prayer, never obscures the essential unity of the Godhead. Luther never swerved from the conviction that "The Deity (or Godhead) cannot be separated, objectively, as the object of divine worship, nor actively, as the creative agent. For the Father is not known, but in the Son, through the Holy Ghost". ('The Creation': Comm. on 1st 5 chapters of Genesis. p.85).

It follows from the above, that Luther found no objection to the practice of addressing prayers to the Holy Spirit. (c.f. his acceptance of the practice of praying to Christ - as noted in the preceding chap.) One of his favourite hymns was "Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist"; and, as we are reminded in 'Christian Worship', the chief Lutheran service "opens with a hymn of invocation to the Holy Ghost". (p.204). As a rule, however, Luther, in conformity with traditional practice, prefers to address prayers to the Father, through Christ, while fully acknowledging that his ability to do so is the direct result of the Holy Spirit's working within him.

These prayers may, of course, take a variety of forms; but all 'types' of prayer are equally dependant upon the working of the Holy Spirit, according to Luther. Two brief confirmations of this fact may be noted. The first is with regard to the prayer of confession, and the other with regard to the prayer of thanksgiving.

As we shall have occasion to note in detail (vide Chapter on 'Confession') Luther lays particular stress between the prayer of confession and the work of the Holy Spirit. The reason for this is that the 'giving of the Holy Spirit' and the 'remission of sins' are two aspects of the same operation. "This we must needs learn, that forgiveness of sins, Christ, and the Holy Ghost, are freely given unto us at the only hearing of faith preached . . .". (Comm. on Galatians. p.184). Luther specifically says that to "forgive sins" is one of the works of the Spirit. (W.A. XI. 53.32f). And, when he points out elsewhere that the whole work of sanctification is entrusted to the Holy Spirit, he is not saying anything essentially at variance with the preceding statement. "The Holy Spirit is never actionless in the godly, but is always working something pertaining to the Kingdom of God". (Select Works. Vol.1. p.153). It is no accident that Luther's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is matched by an unparalleled emphasis upon the prayer of confession.

Luther's own prayers of thanksgiving - as will be shown - may not be so numerous as those of confession, but these too are specifically attributed to the action of the Holy Spirit. "The believing man", Luther says, "hath the Holy Ghost, and where the Holy Ghost dwelleth, He will not suffer a man to be idle, but stirreth him up to all exercises of piety and godliness . . . to prayer, to thanksgiving . . .". (Comm. on Gal. p.130.) Moreover, just as we cannot fully appreciate God's gifts without the working of the Holy Spirit - ('thanksgiving') - so likewise we cannot fully

appreciate the nature of God's Being - ('praise'). "Just as we could never recognise the Father's grace and mercy except for our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is a mirror of the Father's heart, so of Christ we should know nothing, were He not revealed to us through the Holy Spirit". (Great Catechism).

It is the same with the remaining types of prayer. (vide). "Ohne den heiligen Geist wird kein Gebet getan". (Erl. 12. 160). Not only so; it is a necessary corollary of all that has been said that a true prayer will not only never be made without the action of the Spirit, but also that it will never be understood by the hearer without the action of the same Spirit. Hence, in his exposition of the 17th chapter of St. John, Luther can observe: "The words of this prayer are such that, if heard in our ears without the Spirit, they sound like childish nothings". (Select Works. Vol.2 p.4.)

For Luther, then, no prayer would be possible without a 'Giver of Grace' and a 'Hearer of Prayer', i.e. the FATHER. But it would be equally impossible without a 'Spirit of grace' and a 'Spirit of Prayer', i.e. the HOLY SPIRIT. (Table Talk. p.106). The action of the Holy Spirit is not only that which makes men "believe the grace of God, and hope that God will have mercy and be favourable" (Sel. Works. Vol.1. p.152); it is also that grace which precedes prayer - which gives the power to pray at all. It was this fact - that the power to pray at all is the result of God's own grace preceding and making possible prayer - which was neglected, if not repudiated, in Romanist piety; and it is one of Luther's greatest services to religion that he should have reemphasised and brought to the fore a truth which is the very heart of New Testament prayer.

Chapter IV. PRAYER AND THE SACRAMENTS.

a. Introduction.

It is easy to establish that, for Luther, prayer was not only intimately bound up with a doctrine of the Word and a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but that it also has an intimate relationship to a doctrine of the Sacraments.

In one place he can go so far as to say: "It is certain that in the New Testament there was only one ceremony divinely instituted, that is, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and this was appointed that the people might assemble together to hear the Word and to pray". (Select Works. Vol.4. p.59.) Whether we fully accept this opinion or not, we can, at the outset, simply note that Luther does regard prayer as being indissolvably associated with Sacrament.

It would be equally true (as we shall show) to declare that, in Luther's view, the Sacraments cannot be fully understood without an understanding of the theology of Prayer, and that Prayer cannot be fully understood without an understanding of the theology of the Sacraments. Both are fundamental elements in any true exposition of the Christian Faith.

Only one further point can be noted in this brief introduction. We must remember throughout our study that Luther does not regard the Word, or Prayer, or the Sacraments, as constituting a 'third entity' between God and man. In each case Luther rather regards them as the forms in which God immediately presents Himself to man. As we have been reminded: "Luther does not acknowledge an unmediated relation to God. In a unique and definitive sense He approaches man through the Word, or Christ. But He also approaches man through the created orders and offices . . .". (E.M. Carlsen: 'The Reinterpretation of Luther' p.210.) But this divine 'approach' - through the Word, or Prayer, or the Sacraments - is fully appreciated by man only within the context of a previously existing religious relationship. This, of course, was the practical reason why the religious relationship was of first importance to Luther.

(b) The Place of Word and Sacrament.

We have already noted that Luther regards Prayer as being 'constituted' not by any willing or doing of man, but by the Word of God. This is exactly how he regards the Sacraments to be constituted.

Luther's writings are full of his insistence that it is the objective reality of God's Promise which constitutes the Sacraments, just as it is the objective reality of His Promise which secures the true validity and efficacy of Prayer. Without this Word of Promise neither Prayer nor Sacrament can have any genuine meaning at all. "God never has dealt, or does deal, with men otherwise than by the Word of Promise". (Babyl. Captiv. p. 166.)

The primacy of the Word has been sufficiently emphasised in chapter II ; and it is unnecessary to repeat what was said there. Our present concern is to note a vital distinction , drawn by Luther , without which we can understand fully neither his doctrine of the Sacraments nor his doctrine of Prayer. "In every promise of God two things are set before us , the word and the sign. The word we are to understand as the testament , and the sign as being the sacrament ; thus , in the mass , the Word of Christ is the testament , the bread and wine the sacrament". (Babyl. Captiv. p. 169.)

This distinction is made by Luther only by way of re-emphasising that the Word alone constitutes the Sacraments. The material sign itself does not do so ; rather the Word accompanying it. So important , indeed , is this distinction to Luther that he is able to assert that "A man can have and use the Word without the sign or sacrament". (ibid.) This point will be expanded in the following section.

In view of Luther's frequent reference to three sacraments , it is worth pointing out here , on the general subject of Word and Sacrament , that Luther specifically says "if we speak with perfect accuracy, there are only two Sacraments in the Church of God , Baptism and the Bread ; since it is in those alone that we see both a sign divinely instituted , and a promise of remission of sins". (ibid. p. 243) These Sacraments - 'external signs of grace' - are for Luther a special form of the saving Word of God ; which means that he regards them always as having their validity and power from the historic Christ , Who deals personally with men.

Assuming the personal relationship between God and man to have been established , i.e. through man's response to the prime reality of the Word , God also provides (Luther says) "various ways , modes , and manners through which we obtain grace and the forgiveness of sins ; as , first , Baptism and the Sacrament (Communion) , . . also . . Prayer". (Comm. on Sermon on Mount. p. 262.) This linking of prayer with the Sacraments is especially interesting. Indeed , we can proceed to note a distinctive conclusion which Luther reaches in regard to this link.

In short , his reasoning is that Prayer itself might well be considered to fulfil the conditions necessary for it to be described as a sacrament. "There are some other things which it may seem that we might reckon among sacraments - all these things , namely , to which a divine Promise has been made , such as Prayer. . For Christ has promised in many places to hear those who pray . .". (Babyl. Captiv. p. 243) However , Luther judges that "It has seemed best . . to consider as Sacraments properly so-called those promises which have signs annexed to them. The rest , as they are not attached to signs , are simply Promises". (ibid.) While noting this traditional Protestant distinction , we must not under-emphasise the ground had in common by Prayer and Sacrament , in Luther's thought. His great concern always to stress

this common ground is frequently expressed in his writings. As this will occupy us under the separate contexts of the remaining sections, and as the larger part of these studies will concern the relation of Communion and Prayer, we can conclude the present section with one of Luther's comments regarding the relation between Baptism and Prayer, and the relation of each to the Word.

"Because God's Word is associated with it (Baptism), it is not a mere work, as that which itself avails or effects something, but a divine Word and token upon which faith rests. Thus also our Prayer, as our work, would not avail or effect anything; but its efficacy comes from this, that it is done in accordance with His command and promise, so that it may well be regarded as a sacrament, and rather as a divine work, than as one of our own". (Comm. on Sermon on Mount. p. 261f) Without the objective reality of God's Promise, neither Prayer nor Sacrament can even exist. And without it there could be no place for man's faith - since there would be nothing at all in which to have faith.

(c) The Place of Faith.

We noted above that "God never has dealt, or does deal, with men otherwise than by the Word of Promise". We can now note the complementary truth as Luther sees it. "We can never deal with God otherwise than by faith in the Word of His Promise". (Babyl. Captiv. p. 167) "Nothing else is required for a worthy reception of the mass than faith, resting with confidence on this promise, believing Christ to be truthful (in His promises) . . . , and not doubting that these innumerable blessings have been bestowed upon us". (ibid.)

For Luther, the basic thing to be believed is not so much the Sacraments themselves as this Word of Promise spoken in them. Just as we receive the promised benefits of prayer only by believing in the Word of Promise, so also do we receive the promised benefits of the Sacraments by the same means. Luther says: "It will be safest . . . to go to the mass in no other spirit than that in which thou wouldest go to hear any other promise of God; that is, to be prepared not to do many works . . . but to believe and receive all that is promised to thee in the ordinance". (ibid. p. 168.)

"The sacraments are not fulfilled by being done (non implentur dum fiunt), but by being believed (sed dum creduntur)". (ibid. p. 190) And from that Luther deduces that it "cannot be true that there is inherent in the Sacrament a power effectual to produce justification, or that they are efficacious signs of grace". This is exactly what he feels about Prayer. The efficacy of prayer lies not in its being done but in being believed in. As Jacobs has pointed out: "The sacramental presence is intended only to apply, in all its force, the promise of the Gospel, and thus to confirm and strengthen faith. Where this promise is not received, the sacramental presence remains, but it brings judgment instead of blessing". ('Martin Luther'. p. 373.)

This is precisely what Luther thought had happened in contemporary Romanism - the 'sacramental presence remained' (in connection with

the various celebrations of the Sacraments), 'but it brought judgment instead of blessing'. There was little sense of personal communion with a 'gracious God'. Without personal faith in the Word, a man's 'general' knowledge of God leads only to false religion - whether it be in the sphere of the sacraments, or in the more general sphere of prayer. Without personal faith in the Word, man will be tempted to have 'faith' in the Sacraments themselves - and will thus be preparing for himself a profound disillusionment.

Luther is concerned to stress the necessity for faith in the Word, as against faith in the Sacrament; indeed, to point out that part of the function of Sacraments is to nourish that same faith in the Word. It is so that men might 'the more certainly believe that God is merciful and favourable that God gives, with His Word, some external sign and work, or sacrament. (c.f. Weim. ed. 42, 184.) The Augsburg Confession, too, declares that "The Sacraments were instituted not merely to be signs whereby Christians might externally recognise one another, but signs and testimonies of God's will towards us, to awaken and strengthen our faith". (Article 13.)

While Luther stresses the necessity of faith (as we noted also in Chapter 1), he is, however, careful to avoid being criticised as the ultra-subjectivist. He is severe not only upon the view which considers personal faith to be of minor importance, but likewise upon the view which regards the receiver's faith as the main element in the constitution of the Sacraments. Many subjective elements there undoubtedly are in Luther's religion (e.g. his exegesis of the Bible, according to Dr. Mackinnon: 'Luther & the Reformation.' Vol. 3. p. 7.), but in this matter of the Sacraments he criticised strongly such sectarian 'heresies' as those which placed exclusive stress upon the feelings of those who came to the Sacraments.

One writer has admirably summed up the point thus: "The Sacraments guard against two errors. First, they exclude all rationalistic and legalistic attempts to climb up into heaven (the error of the Papists); and secondly, they are opposed to the purely 'spiritual' interpretation of religion which lays all stress on the individual believer's inward experience (the error of the sects)". (P. Watson: op. cit. p. 161.) Luther himself has said: "God has from the beginning of the world dealt with all saints through His Word, and has given along with the same, external signs of grace etc. This I say that no one may undertake to deal with God without these means, or to build himself a special way to heaven; otherwise he will do despite, and break his neck. So the Pope with his followers has done, and still does, and today the Anabaptists and other sectaries do". (Weim. ed. 51, 287f).

It is worth noting in this connection that the objective aspect of the Sacraments is particularly emphasised by Luther in his polemic against the Anabaptists and other sects, while in controversy with Romanists he tends to give most of the stress to faith in God's Word of promise. But there is no inconsistency in this. Luther was merely speaking the most appropriate word in a given set of circumstances. But, as Dr. Mackinnon has observed: "However much he might exalt individual faith in relation to God, the Word was for him the supreme power

as well as the supreme authority in religion , and that faith is only the medium by which the Word of God works in the heart of the believer". (op.cit. Vol.4. p.60.)

A few more specific points can now be made regarding the place of this faith , first with regard to the Sacrament of Communion , and second with regard to the Sacrament of Baptism.

We have already noted the general statement that the Sacraments "are not fulfilled by being done , but by being believed". We can now note an even more categorical statement by Luther , with reference to Communion, which illustrates the importance which he attaches to the response of faith to God's Word. "He who has partaken of an unconsecrated wafer has not sinned , for his faith has saved him , because he believed that he received the true sacrament , and trusted in God's Word . . . All is possible to him who believes . . . Adulterated wafers are no sacrament, except in their actual use". ('Letters of M.L.' p.467. To Nicolas Amsdorf.) (Note : 'Sacrament', to Luther , always means the 'Sacrament administered' - just as the 'Word' always means the 'Word preached'.)

Again , speaking on the question of private communion (a practice which Luther more or less repudiated) he advises a man who has been refused the Sacrament (of Communion) by the Church to remember that salvation is not dependent upon that Sacrament. "He can be saved through believing the Word". (ibid. p. 336) And in his letter to Herr Pancratz he writes : " . . having received the greater , viz. the Word of God , why should they be forbidden accepting the lesser ? For , in an exigency , one can do without the Sacrament , but not without the divine Word. Nevertheless , . . steadfastly proclaim the doctrine of the Sacrament". (ibid. p. 424.)

Luther's debt to St. Augustine in this matter is obvious. "A man can have and use the Word without the sign or sacrament. 'Believe', saith St. Augustine , 'and thou hast eaten'". (Babyl. Capt. p.169.) If this be accepted , of course , it means that no credence can be given to the claim that a Sacrament 'justifies' a man. Luther strenuously denied that a Sacrament had any such magical power. What 'justifies' is (as we noted in Chap. 1) not the Sacrament itself , but faith in that Word to which the Sacrament is added .

Moreover , if this personal faith is the all-important 'subjective factor' , there can be no accepting the widespread view of Rome whereby man must seek desperately to purify himself before approaching God, in the mistaken belief that , without this purity , he cannot be accepted of God - either in the Sacrament of Communion , or in Prayer.

Luther's own personal testimony puts the point succinctly. He links prayer and sacrament in relating his earlier 'temptation' : "Under Popery all my temptation was this ; I used to say that 'I would willingly go to the Sacrament if I were but worthy'. Thus we seek , naturally , a purity in ourselves . . . that we might have no need of grace. When we would pray we think thus : 'willingly would I pray , but I am not worthy that God should hear me'. (Select Works. Vol.1. p.281.)

Luther is no longer in doubt as to the correct procedure for a man in that situation. "Rather, when thou feelest thou art a sinner and unfit to pray, thou shouldest then go the most to prayer and sacrament. For in what other way would thou become righteous but by the Word and Sacrament? (ibid.) Luther's emphasis, in other words, is objective, not subjective. He stresses not what man can or should do, but what God has done and will do. "Wherever there is a divine promise, there faith is required". (Babyl. Capt. p. 191.)

Indeed, the direct inspiration of all Luther's exhortations to faith, both in the matter of prayer and of the Sacraments, is his firm recognition that God has promised something. Man's moral imperfection is of little account (providing he has faith in the Word) beside the graciousness of a God who has revealed Himself in Christ. "Thou must take hold of the Word of Christ, and fix thine eyes much more strongly on it than on the cogitations of thine own infirmity. For the works of the Lord are great, and He is mighty to give beyond all that we can seek or comprehend". (ibid. p. 171.)

This principle, then, can now be illustrated, finally, with regard to Baptism. Luther's view is clearly stated thus: "It is not Baptism which justifies any man, or is of any advantage, but faith in that Word or promise to which Baptism is added; for this justifies and fulfils the meaning of Baptism". (Babyl. Capt. p. 190.)

Throughout his writings Luther is just as anxious to strengthen his case against the 'justifying power' of Baptism, as he is to do so with regard to Communion. (Though, as we shall note, his views did not remain stable). Luther quotes Christ's words 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned' (Mark xvi.16) and comments significantly on them: "Thus He shows that in the Sacrament (Baptism) faith is so necessary that it can save us even without the Sacrament; and on this account when He says 'He that believeth not', He does not add 'and is not baptised'". (ibid. p.191f). This of course is exactly parallel to Luther's view of the place of faith in the Sacrament of Communion, noted above.

It is true that the nature of this 'faith' which was so essential in Baptism is not the same throughout Luther's writings. The faith which 'justifies and fulfils the meaning of Baptism' was at first the 'fides aliena' of the Church or of the parents. Later Luther substituted for it the idea, shared by Calvin, of a 'primitive but true and real faith which may be presumed to exist in the souls of infant recipients'. (J. Baillie: 'What Is Christian Civilisation?'. p. 79). In any criticism, however, which we may feel moved to make of Luther, it is wise to remember that his search for a 'justifying faith' is only a measure of his desire to reject any suggestion that the Sacrament itself has any magical efficacy.

A. Harnack, for instance, judges (unfairly, we think) that "Luther retained infant baptism rather as the Sacrament of regeneration, and while, according to his views, it should have been at the most a symbol of prevenient grace, he conceived of it as an efficacious act."

Thus , although there was an unwillingness to observe it , there was a return to the opus operatum , and the relation between gracious effect and faith was severed". (Hist. of Dogma. Vol.VII. p.251.)

It is impossible to deny that Luther did become more of a 'High Churchman' in his later years , and that he emphasised the place of the Sacraments more than at any time in his life. But at no time did he completely forget the 'relation between gracious effect and faith'. A trace there is of reversion to Romanist practice - but he did not betray his earlier evangelical principles. (c.f.H.H.Kramm: 'The Theol.of M.L.' p. 32.) As already quoted : "It is not Baptism which justifies any man , or is of any advantage , but faith in that word or promise to which Baptism is added". (Babyl.Capt. p.190.)

(d) The Religious Significance of the Sacraments.

Luther's emphasis upon the connection between 'gracious effect and faith' arises out of his conviction that the religious relationship is of first importance. Consequently , neither Prayer nor the Sacraments can be regarded rightly as 'instruments' placed in man's hands - instruments by which he can 'influence' God; neither Prayer nor Sacrament can be effective 'ex opere operato' ; neither the praying with the lips nor the performance of the rite will , in itself , effect the religious relationship.

Luther's whole approach to the subject of prayer as well as Sacrament had been an intensely critical one. His primary criticism of contemporary religion applied with equal force to Sacrament as to Prayer - neither must be regarded as merely (or even principally) ritual acts. For this minimised the importance of personal faith. Hence Luther rejects not only the idea of 'meritorious prayer' , but also the idea that the mass (Communion) is a sacrifice which men can offer to God in order to secure His favour.

"It has come about that at this day there is no belief in the Church more generally received or more firmly held than that the mass is a good work and a sacrifice. This abuse has brought in an infinite flood of other abuses , until faith in the Sacrament has been utterly lost". (Babyl. Capt. p. 147). Without this faith , the whole religious significance of the Sacraments is lost. "In marked contrast with the mediaval theory" , H.E.Jacobs says , "Luther taught that the Sacraments were not rites in which man brought something to God , but that they were institutions and acts of God , in which He offered and conferred the grace of the Gospel". ('Martin Luther'. p. 373.)

Luther denied that the 'grace of the Gospel' could be known in any other way than personal faith. Any other approach to the Sacraments was bound to result in religious uncertainty. He says , for example: "To regard the Sacrament (Communion) as a sacrifice instead of a pledge of God's love in Christ is to beget doubt and fear instead of a confidence and joy. For who can be sure that this so-called sacrifice is acceptable to God ?" (Werke. VIII. 441. quot.Mackinnon:op.cit. Vol3. p. 43.)

Here we have an exact parallel to Luther's prayer-experience on Pilate's stairs in Rome, regarding the efficacy of his own prayers. And he reaches a parallel conclusion: neither a sacrifice nor a 'meritorious' prayer can bring religious certainty of God's graciousness.

But whereas in Prayer the assurance of divine grace is given only in a general form (likewise in the hearing and reading of the Word), in the Sacraments Luther found the application to the believer of the 'special assurance' of divine grace. In this he differed from Zwingli, who claimed that this individual application was made principally (if not solely) through the inner testimony of the Spirit, rather than through the external pledge. Luther's feelings on this point are very strong indeed. "God wishes to deal with us in no other way than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments; and, whatever without the Word and Sacraments is extolled as Spirit, is the devil himself". (Erl. ed. 25, 140. - Schmalkald Arts.)

But he is always careful to guard himself from giving the impression that these Sacraments are the principal means of grace. This is the opposite error of Rome which Luther had cause to protest against so frequently. And, in particular, he was no less than horrified to find the view which regarded the Sacraments as that which gave efficacy to the Word - instead of vice versa.

A fine passage from 'The Reinterpretation of Luther' sums up this vital point. "In the Roman Church the Sacraments had become virtually the only means of grace. The Word had importance because it is related to the Sacraments. It enables men to prepare themselves for the reception of the same, and exhorts them to avail themselves of the proffered benefits. On the other hand, when Luther speaks of the means of grace, his primary reference is to the Word. The Sacraments are means of grace by virtue of the Word which is connected with them. The Sacraments constitute one of the forms that the Word takes in approaching men. . . . The Sacraments do not confer upon man anything that the Word itself does not give. This, at least, is Luther's characteristic view. . . . The importance of the Sacrament does not lie in the uniqueness of the gift that it brings, but in the fact that it is a visible acted Word. . . ." (E.M. Carlsen: p.134f).

This is a basic conception in Luther's thought. It might be called the 'finitum capax infiniti' principle in his theology. "Divine things", says H.M. Kramm, "and God's greatest gift, the Holy Spirit, are not flying about somewhere in the world unseen and unheard. They come to us, using the vehicles of definitely earthly mediums, spoken words, printed books (Bible), water (Baptism), bread and wine (Lord's Supper)". (op.cit. p. 52.)

This, of course, means (as it meant to Luther) that the Sacraments cannot be regarded as rites in which man brings something to God. They are 'opera Dei'. Contemporary Romanism, according to Luther, was blind to that fundamental religious truth. Regarding the Sacrament of Communion, he says: "Where we ought to be grateful for blessings bestowed upon us, we come in our pride to give what we ought

to receive , and make a mockery . . of the mercy of the Giver". (Babyl. Capt. p. 173.)

This general principle applies with equal validity - as Luther points out - in the sphere of Prayer as in the sphere of Sacrament. "It is a self-contradiction to call a mass a sacrifice , for a mass is something we receive , but a sacrifice is something we offer. But one and the same thing cannot be both received and offered at the same time , nor can it at once be given and accepted by the same person , any more than prayer can be the same thing as that which we pray for ; nor is it the same to pray and to receive the thing prayed for". (Luther's Ref. Writings. trans. Woolf. Vol.1. p. 249.)

To Luther the God of the Sacrament is the same God of Prayer ; His delight is to give. "Here in the Sacrament thou wilt receive from Christ's mouth forgiveness of sins which includes and brings along with it God's grace , His Spirit , and all His gifts". (Babyl. Capt. p.153). (Luther can make the above statement , moreover , because he firmly believed that Christ's revelation of God was a continuous process , and not just an act accomplished once.)

In view of the above , then , we find Luther presenting such a succinct summary of his critique of Roman practice as the following : "Popedom stands upon the mass two manner of ways ; first , spiritually , holding that the mass is a worshipping of God ; secondly , corporally , being maintained and preserved not by divine power , but by human and temporal princes". (Table Talk. p. 223.) For Luther , however , just as in prayer it is not the spoken words but the accompanying Word which works salvation and faith , so in the Sacrament of Communion it is not the body and blood of Christ , but the Word of the Gospel accompanying them , which secures the promised blessings. Where this Word is not received , the sacramental presence no doubt remains , but - as already indicated - it brings 'judgment instead of blessing'. It certainly does not bring the religious assurance of salvation.

Heiler's judgment is an implied criticism both of the Sacramentalist (Rome) and of the 'Spiritual' (the sects) - Luther's chief opponents in his fight to safeguard the true religious significance of the Sacraments : "The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Churches is not a dramatic renewal of the redeeming deed of Christ , and mystical union with the exalted Lord , but a sign and pledge of the comfort of forgiveness and assurance of salvation". ('Prayer'. p.344.)

(e) Liturgical Relationships.

Luther's further defining of the liturgical relationship between Prayer and Sacrament chiefly concerns the Sacrament of Communion - though we shall note subsequently a few points on the subject of Baptism. First , then , with regard to Prayer and Communion .

Prayers are , of course , part of the Communion Service in

all denominations. But Luther discovered, to his annoyance, that in Romanism the simple act of breaking bread and drinking from a cup had developed into a rigid complicated liturgy. The cultural act had assumed primary importance, whereas the liturgical prayer (which had become stereotyped) was 'demoted' to a place of secondary importance. Indeed, it had lost much of its meaning for the majority of worshippers.

Heiler admits that "not a few of the prayers in the mass which sound on the lips of the priest are indeed the same as those ~~which~~ with which the primitive Church gave thanks and offered supplications. But the liturgical prayer of the mass is no longer 'common prayer'. By the use of an ancient language, half-understood or not at all, the bond between the officiant and the congregation is torn asunder. The priest prays in the name of the people; the congregation do not pray with him, but by themselves. . . . The congregation has become a spectator. At most, the prayer of the people present at the mass is individual, not common". (op.cit. p. 341.)

Luther had found that the living prayer of the congregation had been ousted (largely, if not completely) by the ritual prayer of the priest. And at first Luther did little more than prepare private prayers which might be said silently by the people while the Celebrant said mass, in Latin, at the altar. (c.f. W.Maxwell: 'Outline of Christian Worship', p. 75.) But his efforts to reform the situation were intensified with the appearance of his 'Babylonish Captivity' in 1520. (This book "still holds its place as the most important discussion of sacramental doctrine in the history of Protestantism". B.L.Woolf: op. cit. Vol.1. p. 205.)

Three years later, in the 'Formula Missae', there is, for instance, a comment the theological significance of which is considerably greater than the almost compromising, apologetic tone of the words might suggest. Speaking of the Communion he says: "If he (the priest) desire to pray before the Communion the prayer 'Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Son of the living God, Who by the will of the Father, etc.', he will not pray amiss; only it should be changed from the singular to the plural, 'ours' and 'us' for 'mine' and 'me'. Likewise the prayer 'The body of the Lord' etc. 'keep my soul and thine unto eternal life'".

Here, as elsewhere, Luther is concerned to emphasise the 'priesthood of all believers'. But he is concerned to do something more than that - something which we have noted in other connections. He desires, within the framework of the above liturgical relationships, to differentiate between 'good works' and faith. On the one hand he freely admits that the "prayers which we pour forth in the presence of God when we meet to partake of the mass are good works or benefits which we mutually impart, apply, and communicate, and offer up for one another; as the Apostle James teaches us to pray for one another, that we may be saved". (Babyl. Capt. p. 175.)

But, on the other hand, he goes on to lay down the principle that "the mass or promise of God is not completed by our prayers, but only by our faith; and in faith we pray and do other good works". (ibid.)

Luther objected, for example, to the prayer in the canon of the mass that "the sacrifice may be accepted like the sacrifice of Abel". This, to him, was a travesty of the Sacrament of Communion. Luther may indeed have been conservative in many things regarding worship, but on this point he was adamant. As Köstlin indicates: "The Catholic liturgy contained the inadmissible idea that we must pray to God to accept the Body of His Son as a sacrifice". ('Life of Luther'. p. 422.)

In contrast to the confusion which prevailed in Romanist circles regarding the real function and place of prayer within the framework of the Sacrament of Communion, Luther's own thought is crystal-clear. "We must make a clear distinction", he says, "between the testament and the sacrament itself, and the prayers which we offer at the same time. And not only so, but we must understand that those prayers are of no value at all, either to him who offers them, or to those for whom they are offered, unless the testament has first been received by faith, so that the prayer may be that of faith, which alone is heard". (Babyl. Captiv. p. 176.)

Luther is convinced that the 'prayer of faith' is a relatively rare phenomenon within the Roman celebrations of Communion. Certainly it was considered as of much less importance than the observance of the rite itself - an error which Luther freely criticised. "What priest sacrifices with the intention and idea of only offering up prayers? They all imagine that they are offering Christ Himself to God the Father, as an all-sufficient victim; and that they are doing a good work on behalf of all men who, as they allege, will profit by it. They trust in the 'opus operatum', and do not attribute the effect to prayer. Thus, by a gradual growth of error, they attribute to the Sacrament the benefit which springs from prayer; and they offer to God what they ought to receive as a gift from Him". (ibid. p. 175.)

As Dr. Mackinnon has observed: "In the mass we receive a gift; we offer nothing to God except our prayers". (op.cit. Vol.2. p. 254.) This being Luther's view, he is most anxious for practical reasons to emphasise the distinction which must be observed between the function of prayer and that of Sacrament. "The priest", he warns, "must beware of celebrating votive masses . . . and of receiving any payment for the mass, or presuming to offer any votive sacrifice; but let him carefully refer all this to the prayers which he offers . . . Let him think thus; 'I will go and receive the Sacrament for myself alone, but while I receive it, I will pray for this or that person, and thus for the purpose of food and clothing receive payment for my prayers and not for the mass'. (Babyl. Captiv. p. 179.)

The words 'receive the Sacrament for myself' are full of significance. They are the key to another distinction which Luther draws between the function of Prayer and Sacrament. "Prayer is something quite different from the mass. Prayer can be extended to comprehend as many people as I choose; the mass covers none other than him who exercises his own faith, and then only so far as he exercises it". (B.L.Woolf: op. cit. Vol.1. p. 247.) To Luther, the recipient, not the ministrant, is the main human factor involved in Communion; so much so that, even though a wicked man is administering the Sacrament, both the testament

(God's promise) and the sacrament (the sign) , if believed in by the receiver , are the same.

However , in the matter of oblations , as we might expect , Luther is careful to point out that the position is entirely different. For , "since it is not the mass but the prayers which are offered to God, it is evident that the oblations of a wicked priest are of no value. As Gregory himself says , 'When we employ an unworthy person as advocate , the mind of the judge is prejudiced against us'". And Luther's conclusion is that "We must not therefore confound these two things , the mass and prayer , sacrament and work , testament and sacrifice". (Babyl. Capt. p. 181.)

As with Communion , so with Baptism Luther sought to minimise the importance of the external part of the rite , and give greater prominence to the prayers associated with the Sacrament. Mackinnon is persuaded that Luther "believed faith was generated in the infant at Baptism in virtue of the prayers of priest and parents. He therefore added an exhortation in which he impressed upon them the necessity and efficacy of personal faith and earnest participation in these prayers. The mere external and symbolic parts of the rite were , by comparison , of the least importance . .". (op.cit. Vol.3. p. 114.)

It is difficult to say whether these prayers associated with Baptism had even the slightest 'meritorious' character in Luther's view . We feel they did not. The simplest explanation of the meaning of Baptism - and probably the best - seems to have been Luther's view , i.e. it is basically an expression of man's complete dependence upon God. This, of course , is exactly how Luther regards prayer. Baptism , to Luther , was a 'symbol of preventent grace' ; and his many theological utterances on Baptism should not blind us to that fundamental evangelical approach to the subject which we believe Luther to have adopted.

It is from the above point of view that we can understand his feeling that there was a certain appropriateness that this Sacrament should be reserved for children ; since thereby the complete dependence of the helpless soul on God is unequivocally expressed. We shall find that Luther upholds the prominence which he gives to prayers of Petition for a similar reason.

The prayers of faith , then , which are so prominent a part of Luther's administration of Baptism , are the natural outcome of that permanent attitude of faith which he has in a gracious God - One Who seeks man even before man realises the possibility of his seeking God. As one writer has reminded us : " When Luther was most afflicted with temptations and doubts , he would write two words on his table with a piece of chalk : 'Baptizatus sum'. He meant that Baptism was the foundation of Christian certainty. In the fact that he was baptised before he had any knowledge of salvation or any desire for it , God teaches him that the divine mercy sought him independent of his attitude to God". (J.S.Wholes: 'Christian Doctrine'. p. 165).

In a word, both in the case of Baptism and Communion, we are concerned not with a mere rite in which man brings something to God, but with an act of God; and, so far as Prayer is associated with each, it is so not to 'complete' the Sacrament in question, but to apprehend the Promise attached to prayer.

(f). Conclusion.

While taking into account the special functions of Prayer and Sacrament as these have been noted above, it is nevertheless true, as one writer has stated, that "... sacraments are in themselves and essentially forms or modes of prayer. They are ways of drawing near to God that He has appointed, claiming the special blessing which He has promised to give in connection with each ordinance to those who rightly approach Him in this way". (Hall: 'Christian Doc. of Prayer'. *italics mine*). For Luther, the administration of the Sacraments is not simply an authoritative act performed by powers received from God. It is, besides this, an act of Prayer, commending the recipient to God. The re-discovery and proclaiming of this latter fact is one of Luther's many services to Protestantism.

Luther once stated that "If I were to speak according to the usage of Scripture, I should hold that there was only one Sacrament, and three sacramental signs". (note: he includes 'Penance' here) (Babyl. Capt. p. 147). On his behalf, we might go even further in an endeavour to find an all-inclusive formula to express Luther's own viewpoint; namely, that if we were speaking even more strictly according to the usage of Scripture, we should hold that there was only one Promise, and that this Promise is appropriated not only through the general mode or form of Prayer, but also through the more specific channels of the Sacraments. It is indeed only in such a context that we can appreciate the closeness of relationship which exists, in the thought of Luther, between Prayer and the Sacraments.

Chapter V. PRAYER AND THE CHURCH.

(a). Luther's View of the Church.

No passage in Luther's works would serve better as a point of reference for our observations on his doctrine of prayer in relation to the Church as the following :

"There is on earth through the whole wide world no more than one holy common Christian Church, which is nothing less than the congregation or assembly of the saints, i.e. the pious believing men on earth which is gathered, preserved, and ruled by the Holy Ghost. . . I believe that no one can be saved who is not found in this congregation, and I believe that in this congregation or Church all things are common. . . and no one has anything of his own; therefore all the prayers and good works of the whole congregation must help. . . and strengthen me and every believer at all times, in life and death, and thus bear each other's burdens, as St. Paul teaches. I believe that in this congregation and nowhere else there is forgiveness of sins; that, outside of it, good works, however great they may be, or many, are of no avail for the forgiveness of sins. But that, within it, no matter how much, how greatly, or how often, men may sin, nothing can hinder forgiveness of sins, which abides wherever and as long as this one congregation abides. To this congregation Christ gave the Keys, and says, in Matt. 16, to the one man Peter, who stands as the representative of the one and only Church, 'Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven'". (Brief Explan. of 10 Commands, Creed, and Lord's Prayer. Works. Vol. 2. p. 372 - 374.)

Since Luther's conception of the Church profoundly influenced his conception of common prayer, it is essential that we should first be clear as to the former. Certainly it is grossly wrong to imagine Luther's doctrine of the Church to be poorly thought-out, and poorly set-down. Whaley, for example, has strongly refuted such a suggestion. "In Whitney's 'Reformation Essays' the old clichés are repeated, unsupported by any evidence, that Luther made himself the symbol of the individual conscience and of individual liberty, and that he underestimated the value of good works, and 'really cared little for the Church'". ('Christian Doctrine' p. 144.)

We have already noted that Luther was not the 'superindividualist' nor did he underestimate the value of good works. We must now note that he 'cared a great deal' for the Church. This is not to say that Luther's conception of the Church was his most important conviction. To him, the Church was of necessity a secondary idea, in contrast to the Word, which was always primary. It was this Word which brought the Church into being at all.

As Watson has pointed out, for Luther it is the "preaching about Christ, the proclamation of the Word, that is constitutive of the Church; for if the Church is the mother of Christians, it is not the mother but the daughter of the Word". (op. cit. p. 169). Wherever the Word evokes faith, there is the Church. "Where Christ is not preached,

there is no Holy Spirit to form the Christian Church, to call and gather it together, without which none can come to the Lord Christ". (W. & B. 102.) As the Augsburg Confession has it: "By Word and Sacraments as by instruments, the Holy Spirit creates faith where and when it pleases God" - 'ubi et quando visum est Deo'. (Article V.)

To Luther, the Church is not only created by Word and Sacrament, through the Spirit; it is also maintained by them, through the Spirit. Word and Sacrament are essential not only to create faith, but to maintain it. The Church - to refer again to our original quotation - is "pious, believing men", with emphasis on the 'believing'. One can no more pray without faith than one can be a member of the true Church without faith. In both cases, essentially, it must be faith in the Word.

Here, we find Luther objecting not only against the view encouraged by Rome (namely, that men should believe in the power of the Church itself, the Pope, rather than the 'Word'), but also against the view encouraged by the 'Spirituals' (namely, that one should put even more stress upon immediate religious experience than upon the objective 'Word'). The Church, Luther felt, having been called into being by the Word, must if it were to be a true Church, refer all matters of faith primarily to the Word.

Carlsen puts this point excellently in his 'Reinterpretation of Luther'. "Luther's objection to the sectarian movements is the same as his objection to Rome - they do not allow the Word, by which the Church is created, to occupy the central place. In this case, immediate religious experience, instead of the hierarchy, is substituted for it". (p. 129.) Luther himself specifically says: "The work of the Word and the Spirit . . . is not effected apart from the Church". And we shall find in a moment that this 'work' includes prayer.

Luther's frequent exhortation to men was to "go to the Churches, attend them, and inquire"; "he who is to find Christ must first find the churches"; "he must not trust to himself, nor build a bridge of his own to heaven by his own reason". (W.A. X.1; 140. 7f.) In fact, Luther can declare, quite consistently and categorically, that outside of the Church there is no salvation (ibid. 140. 16f.) This may sound suspiciously like the Romanist 'extra ecclesia, nulla salus'; but Luther's view could hardly be more at variance with that notion, as interpreted by the official Church. For Luther, there is no salvation where there is no Saviour. Christ is to be found only where the Word is preached, and that preaching is done in the Christian Church.

Luther regarded the Church as the 'communio sanctorum', the living body of believers in the midst of which the redeeming gospel of Christ endures throughout generations. As Dr. Mackintosh indicates: "The grace which the individual meets and enjoys in Christ he could not have discovered, in Luther's phrase, 'all by himself in a corner'; it is invariably put within his reach by those who bear witness to its reality". ('Types of Mod. Theol'. p.169.) Personal faith must be linked to the Church's faith; personal prayer must equally be linked to that of the

Church. For the Church is the whole company of Christian believers which, as a spiritual fellowship, is one. (Hence, Luther prefers to translate 'communio sanctorum' by "Gemeine" rather than "Gemeinde").

Luther's view of the Church, indeed, is quite distinctive not only when considered with reference to the Romanist view, but also with reference to the views of his fellow-reformers. Probably Mackinnon's statement cannot be bettered in so few words: "Luther's conception of the Church differs from that of Zwingli, Calvin . . . , as well as from that of the Romanists. Whilst the Romanists identify the invisible with the visible Church, Zwingli, Calvin, . . . differentiate sharply between them. The former consists of the elect known only to God . . . the latter is the actual Church as existing on earth. For Luther, on the other hand, the invisible is at the same time the visible Church, inasmuch as it is both the totality of believers in the Word, and therefore, faith being spiritual, an invisible reality perceptible only to believers, and the visible manifestation of this spiritual reality in the common life of believers". (op.cit. Vol. 3. p. 282.)

The Church, for Luther, was the 'totality of believers in the Word'. It was the 'mother that conceives every Christian by the Word of God, which He (the Spirit) reveals and preaches'. (W & B. 102.) It was the 'special community' of the Spirit in the world. But he repudiated any suggestion of 'Apostolic Succession' (as understood by Romanism) or of the hierarchy being, in any sense, the nucleus or principal part of the Church. His standard is a very simple one: "Where God's Word is purely taught, there is also the upright and true Church; for the true Church is supported by the Holy Ghost, not by a succession of inheritance". (Table Talk. p. 170.)

Luther refused, as we might expect from the above, to draw the distinction between priest and layman, such as was drawn, and frankly taught, by the Roman Church. "There is no more than one holy common Christian Church". Its holiness consisted not in the numbers of those in 'holy' Orders, but in the fact of God's operation within it. And here Luther can draw a parallel between the experience of the individual and that of the Church. "Just as the individual is holy by virtue of the grace of God received in faith, not by virtue of his deeds or the quality of his own soul-life, so the Church is holy because the grace of God operates through the Word and the Sacraments which it proclaims and administers". (E.M. Carlson: op.cit. p. 130.)

(b) Prayer a 'Mark' of the Church.

But, in addition, the Church is holy or true only when there are present certain 'marks', among which one of the most important is Prayer - prayer truly conceived and rightly offered. It was on this basis alone - apart from others - that Luther could reject the claim of the Roman Church to be the 'true' Church. Richard and Painter sketch this contrast thus: "In Roman Catholic worship the individual is ignored. The presence of the congregation even is not necessary to the performance of the highest act of divine service. And where the congregation is present, almost the entire worship is performed by the clergy. Little or no provision is made in the chief service for

the prayer, praise, and thanksgiving of the people. In the subjective part of Lutheran worship all is different. The chief service opens with a hymn of invocation of the Holy Ghost, or with a psalm. . . The Wittenberg liturgy (1559) says 'At the conclusion of the sermon, the people shall be admonished to prayer and thanksgiving'. . . The people are exhorted to take part in the worship'. (Christian Worship. p.204). Even congregational singing was regarded by Luther largely as a method of prayer. (c.f. Kramm: op.cit. p. 93.)

For Luther, it was never enough that men should be satisfied with the knowledge that others were praying for them. The Roman Church certainly tended to encourage that idea. Luther did - as we shall note later ('Intercession') - greatly value the prayers of the Church for individuals, but we must note at the moment his insistence that all 'believers in the Word' should pray, as part of the Church, for themselves, and for each other, and with each other. The prayers of the clergy had no 'magical' power. They did not excuse the believer of the necessity of personal prayer, within the context of the worshipping Church. "Some . . . trust to other men's prayers, which indeed are not to be neglected, for the prayer of many hath a more force and power. But thou also must pray as a member of the Church, which with one voice sayeth 'Our Father'". (Comm. on Psalms of Degrees. p. 9.)

Mysticism, likewise, was strongly criticised by Luther because of its failure (inherent in its nature) to give much place to congregational prayer. Prophetic prayer - of which Luther is so outstanding an exponent and example - is strongly social. Here, as Heiler remarks, 'the concern is not so much the salvation of the individual, but of the whole people, the Church'. 'The social character of prophetic religion is unmistakably expressed in the life of prayer'. (op.cit. p. 296.)

For Luther, the very notion of prayer 'in Christ' involves the notion of prayer 'in and with His Body'. He found in the Bible the conclusive evidence that prayer was 'personal', but never 'private'. The 'corporate personality' of the New Israel in Christ was a notion of considerable practical importance to Luther. Prayer - he insisted - was not exclusively a matter between God and the individual soul. This was just one of the aspects of primitive Church practice which Luther was concerned to re-emphasise, namely, men's common membership in the Body of Christ. Christian prayer is impossible outside the context of the life of the people of God - believers in His Word.

"The holy Christian people (Church) is known by prayer and public thanksgiving to God. . . For prayer is one of the holy possessions whereby everything is made holy, as St. Paul says. Thus the Psalms are nothing but prayers, in which praise, thanks, and honour are rendered to God." ('On the Council & Churches'. Works. Vol. 5. p. 270f). In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church (according to Luther) was known by anything other than its stress on congregational prayer according to Christ's Spirit. Even if the clergy were to "say over all the prayers and masses of their Church in one day", they would not, Luther declares, be true bishops and priests. "For the office of true bishops and priests is not to read canonical forms of prayer, nor to attend masses, . . but

to serve them in the Word". (Select Works. Vol.4. p. 288.)

However, this did not mean that Luther approved of the spontaneity, arising without any heart-searching, which expressed itself in prayers. A far better 'spontaneity' is possible within the framework of the Church - prayers which have their source out of man's communion with the Head of the Church, and its members. These prayers must, in fact, be 'conditioned' at every point by the revelation of God in Christ, and His purposes for His children - a revelation declared in the written Word. By forgetting the necessity of this 'conditioning', it is just as easy for the 'Spiritual' to make his Christian liberty an occasion for license ("omitting the customary prayers"), as it is for the Romanist to go to the other extreme and think to be saved by such things as 'formal prayers'. (c.f. 'Christian Liberty'. W & B. p. 132.)

For Luther, the root of poverty of prayer-life, whether personal or ecclesiastical, is a weakened understanding of the whole sphere of true personal relationships. The problem of God's answers to petitions and intercessions is not solely a problem of our own individual relationship to Him - important and indispensable as that was; it is also a question of the nature of God's self-revelation and operation in the world, and of the character of our common life together as the Body of Christ. As Heiler points out: "Just as prayer is in Christianity the central point of personal piety, it is also the focus of congregational worship". (op.cit. p. 305.)

Luther himself leaves us in no doubt as to his view. "Common prayer is precious and most powerful, and it is for its sake that we come together. For this reason also the Church is called a House of Prayer, because in it we are, as a congregation, with one accord to consider our need and the needs of all men, present them before God, and call upon Him for mercy". (Works. Vol.1. 'Treatise on Good Works'. p.233.) He goes on further to define the mode of these prayers, and to offer incidentally a criticism of current practice. "This must be done with heartfelt emotion and sincerity, so that we feel in our hearts the needs of all men, and that we pray with true sympathy for them, in true faith and confidence. Where such prayers are not made in the mass (i.e. 'congregation') it were better to omit the mass. For what sense is there in our coming together into a House of Prayer, which coming together shows that we should make common prayer and petition for the entire congregation, if we scatter these prayers, and so distribute them that everyone prays only for himself, and no one has regard for the other, nor concerns himself for another's need?" (ibid.)

Luther believes that prayers for oneself and prayers for others have essentially the same characteristic: they are both prayers for Christ's action upon ourselves and upon others, that He may be glorified. Apart from the reality of the Church as the Body of Christ, the Christian life would become a meaningless and powerless abstraction - and particularly the life of prayer.

(c) The Relation of 'Private' and 'Public' Prayer.

It would hardly be an

exaggeration to claim for Luther that the primary form of prayer is common prayer, and that 'private' prayer is one aspect of the Church's corporate prayer. This belief, indeed, was the basis of Luther's own success in avoiding a false subjectivity in private prayer.

Heiler, for instance, lays great stress on this 'pedagogic purpose' which can be served by common prayer. He specifically claims that "This pedagogic aim of common prayer was put by the Reformers in the foreground". (op.cit. p. 306.) The prayer of the congregation should lift the individual to a higher state of 'private' devotion. It is 'in Church' that those who are ignorant of true prayer can learn it and practise it. This, certainly, was Luther's emphasis, more than that of any other of the Reformers.

But, quite apart from this 'pedagogic aim', private prayer, exclusively practised, would not be able to sustain itself indefinitely. Public prayer should be, in one sense at least, a more intense and satisfying experience than private prayer. Luther clearly found this - despite our recognition of him as an outstanding example of one who 'went apart to pray'. "He who was wont to pray so unceasingly and fervently in his own chamber declared that praying in company with others soothed him far more than private prayer at home". (Köstlin: 'Life of Luther' p. 555 .)

One can assuredly find passages in Luther's works which seem to suggest one moment that he valued 'private' prayer more than 'public', and another moment that the reverse was true. This is perhaps one of the many places where we encounter Luther's tendency to verbal extravagance; but it is by no means a disproof of our claim that the prayer of the home was complemented by the prayer of the Church, in Luther's own experience and teaching.

Commenting upon Matthew vi. 5f, for instance, he gives us the impression that he values private prayer more highly than the prayer of the Church. "If a man wishes to pray, it is a good thing that he should be by himself; for then he can pour out his prayers to God freely and unrestricted, using words and gestures which would be impossible in front of others". ('Wenn einer beten will, ist es fein, dass er allein sei; da er kann frei und ungehindert sein Gebet zu Gott ausschütten, und Wort und Gebärden führen, das er vor Leuten nicht tun kann'. Erl. 43, 173.) Then, on the other hand, he insists that the truly pious man can never approach God in individual isolation - as is the tendency, for example, in mysticism. "Denke ja, dass du nicht allein da kniest und stehst, sondern die ganze Christenheit oder alle frommen Christen bei dir". (Weimar. 38. 362.)

There is a time for 'isolation', and a time for 'congregation' that is Luther's simple, even obvious, formula. Like all prophetic natures, Luther sought to isolate himself from time to time to 'speak unhindered with his God', only so that he might receive the impulse which sent him to pray more meaningfully for his brethren. Much of God's goodness can be discovered 'privately'; but only to be proclaimed.

One of several passages which seem to speak conclusively of

Luther's insistence upon the interdependence of personal and common prayer is this statement from the *Tischreden*, in which Luther speaks of the one stimulating (reizt) the other: ". . . da eins das andere reizt, bewegt und erhitzt, dass es stark zu Gott dringt und dadurch erlangt ohne allen Zweifel, was es will". (*Erl.* 59. 2.)

In a word, common prayer is a corrective and a completion of private prayer. Luther's emphasis upon the former must always be read in this light. Speaking, for example, of the Commandment 'Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day', he says of the prayer which 'belongs more particularly to this Commandment, and which is called the prayer of the Sabbath day', that it is "the much greater and more important, as being offered up for the whole Christian world, and for all the calamities of men, both friends and enemies. . . This common and public prayer is precious and most effectual; and it is for this that we assemble together". (*Sel. Works. Vol.2. p. 494.*)

(d) The Centrality of the Congregation.

Hence, we find Luther resisting the idea that guidance for Christian living can be had outside the context of the whole movement of God's self-revelation. He opposed the tendency in some of the 'ultra-Spirituals' of his day to believe that God speaks to men without reference to His general plan for their lives. For Luther, what God was to say must be intimately related to what He had said in times past. In fact, summarily, Luther insisted that God's will is known best to those who are living with their brethren the common life of the Church, and sharing in the common prayer of the Church.

Without this sense of 'corporateness', indeed, personal prayer cannot avail. "If we would pray as we ought to do, we must first and principally commend unto God the common state of the Church. For he that seeketh his own welfare and neglecteth the state and prosperity of the Church doth not only show himself to be void of all sense and zeal of piety, but also the prayers which he maketh for himself are vain, and profit him nothing". (*Comm. on Ps. of Deg. p. 66.*)

One of the functions of the Church, according to Luther, was to minister the reconciling Spirit of Christ. This the Church could do through prayer. It is through prayer that the Church communes with its Head, and through prayer by the Church that the Head (not the innumerable saints of orthodox religion) gives 'definiteness' to His intercessory work as 'High Priest before the Father' - in terms of the Church's continued life as His body. As we shall note later (vide 'Intercession') our intercessory prayer for our brethren and the world is the fundamental act of Christian love, and without which the more 'practical' aspects of that love have little force. Yet, Romanism did not agree with this view - in practice, at least; and it is one of Luther's great services to religion that he brought such a view into prominence again.

The above consideration, indeed, offers still another basis for an understanding of Luther's vehemence in repudiating the contemporary practice of sacrifice, and of prayer to the saints. One of

his more simple and tempered statements puts forward the theological grounds upon which he insists that these two practices should be abolished. From Psalm 72, verse 15, Luther reasons: "The old worship of the Law of Moses should be abrogated, and a new worship set up, which should consist in prayer, and the giving of thanks. . . This king, Christ, is truly and properly God . . . and prayer is the worship of the first and greatest Commandment, and is due to God alone". (Manual of the Book of Psalms. p. 191.)

For Luther, worship was not 'priestly' in character (not in the Roman sense), nor could it be performed with perfect effectiveness in the absence of the congregation. "Over against the objective principle of the Word and Sacraments as real means of grace, stands the subjective principle, viz. the faith, devotion, and self-surrender of the congregation, which express themselves by prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, in response to the Gospel. Luther says: "We come together at a time agreed upon, preach and hear God's Word, and bear before God our own and others' ~~many~~ general and particular needs, and thus raise to heaven a strong effective prayer with thanksgiving and praise for God's favour. This we know is true worship and well-pleasing to God". (Richard and Painter. op.cit. p. 203.)

In his 'Order of Divine Worship' Luther is concerned not only to stress the necessity and place of prayer, but the necessity for this being a congregational prayer (as distinct from the prayer of the priest alone). "After the reading and explanation have lasted half-an-hour, or longer, the congregation should thank and praise God, and pray for the fruit of the Word". (ibid. p. 157. - quoted.) For Luther, common prayer was meant to be the direct utterance of a common religious experience, and to serve for mutual edification.

In fact, congregational prayer is the centre and climax of congregational worship. The other parts of the service - including the sermon, as has been noted - are intended to prepare the hearts of the people for this experience of common prayer. It is no accident that Luther mentions preaching and prayer in one breath, in saying that "We must know . . . that the Christian congregation should never assemble except the Word of God be preached and prayer offered, even though it be very short". (Order of Divine Worship. 1523.)

Luther would have been the first to protest against the tendency to be noted in our own day within many Protestant Churches that "the liturgical prayer of the congregation sinks down to a mere appendix of the sermon". (Heiler. op.cit. p. 306.) ; just as he did protest against the contemporary Roman view which saw the value of worship to consist essentially in the completion of the divinely appointed service, which is marked by rigid uniformity of ceremonies. (c.f. Heiler. "The non-sacrificial, purely spiritual worship, with the Word at its centre . . . was revived by the Reformers". p. 302.)

This 'purely spiritual worship', moreover, is, strictly speaking, speech to God rather than speech about God. Direct intercourse with God, rather than the preaching of God's revelation, was the 'worship of God', in Luther's view - and in his own experience. In

other words , prayer is the highest worship of God. Of Psalm 50 Luther can say : "There is here clearly expressed , in the plainest words , what is the highest worship of God . . . And we are here briefly told that the true way to God is to call upon Him in the day of trouble , and give Him thanks for the infinite benefits which we receive from Him". (Manual of Book of Psalms. p. 140.) This is as true of personal prayer as it is of common prayer. Both arise out of the personal relationship of the member(s) to the Head , in the first instance. True prayer - personal or common - cannot arise until God has brought men into fellowship with Himself.

How this fellowship arises is an immensely important point for Luther , and for his view on the relation of prayer and the Church. It will suffice here to state the words of Carlsen , which put concisely what Luther thought in the matter. "God brings men into fellowship with Himself through the forgiveness of sins. Where such fellowship comes into existence , the Church comes into being". (op.cit. p. 32 .) This is an echo of Luther's words , as we noted them in the opening quotation of this chapter. "I believe" , Luther says , "that in this congregation , and nowhere else , there is forgiveness of sins . . . To this congregation Christ gave the Keys".

In such a statement Luther shows how far he has travelled spiritually since the days of his blind allegiance to the Roman Church. The prayer of Confession will be more fully discussed in a separate chapter , but meantime we can observe that , according to Luther , "Not to the ministry as such , but to the entire congregation , and to the ministry only as it acts by the authority and in the name of the congregation , belongs the power of the Keys". (H.M. Jacobs. op.cit. p.378.) Luther's own words are more forceful still. "No one but the Christian Church , i.e. the assembly of all believers in Christ , has this Key ; of this there is no doubt. He who appropriates it to himself , be he Pope , or who he may , commits sacrilege". (On Confession. Erl. 27 . 350 sq.)

The general principle behind this , of course , is the divine Promise of which Luther makes much , that "when two on earth are at one about something for which they pray , it shall be done unto them" ; together with His Promise to be with those who 'gather in His name'. "God would that in His Church one should help and comfort one another as members knit together in one body ; and He hath promised that when two are gathered together in His name , He will be the third amongst them". (Comm. on Psalms of Degrees. p. 228.) God's means of giving assurance of forgiveness , in other words , is via the Prayer of the Church , not via the pronouncement of the Roman hierarchy. A sincere prayer is the only really essential earnest of repentance.

In line with this general theological approach Luther , we find , refuses also to grant 'Sacrament status' to the Service of Ordination. Again it is the prayer of the Church which tends , in Lutheran practice , to displace the 'ex opere operato' elements of the Roman ordinance ('sacrament'). It is the will of the whole Christian community , rather than the pronouncement of the hierarchy , which gives

reality and authority to the ordinance. "In the matter of ordination Luther reacted strongly from the traditional priestly conception . . . In the conferring of ecclesiastical office , all that is necessary , in addition to prayer and the testing of the worthiness of the candidate , is the 'vocation' or calling on the part of the members of the Christian community. 'To ordain' , he says , 'means simply to call and entrust the pastoral office'. Though , beside this vocation , a formal religious ceremony is not essential . . . he himself , in May 1525 , set apart George Rörer , who had not received priestly consecration , to the office of deacon . . . with prayer and the laying on of hands - the first known instance of an ordination in the evangelical form". (J.Mackinnon : op. cit. Vol. 4. p. 93.)

Likewise with ordination to the Ministry. "In 1531 , in the case of Sutel who , though not in priestly orders , had been called to undertake the ministerial function at Gottingen , and had no scruples about dispensing the Lord's Supper , he was of opinion that , if the members deemed it important , he should publicly in Church receive from the other ministers , with prayer and the laying on of hands , authority to celebrate the rite". (ibid.) In Luther's own Formulary in German , for ministerial ordination , we find the commending to God in prayer one of the main features , and essentials , of the service.

Regarding a congregation at Gotha which had elected a curate and sent him to Wittenberg for examination and ordination , Luther wrote back to the Vicar : "We are sending back your John called and elected by you , and also examined and publicly ordained and confirmed into your curacy by us before our congregation , with Prayers to , and praises of , God". ('Briefwechsel. Oct.20th,1535. quoted by H.H.Kramm:op.cit.p.82.)

Kramm's brief description of Confirmation in Lutheran Churches can serve admirably as a summary of the place of Prayer and the Church in all similar Christian ordinances , in Luther's viewpoint. "It is a matter of course that prayers are offered for these young Christians , and in most Lutheran Churches the minister or ministers present follow the Biblical example of the laying on of hands. But this ceremony is . . . not in any way necessary to the Act of Confirmation . . . If hymns are sung , and Prayers offered asking the Holy Spirit to guide the candidates , it is not meant to be an act of transferring the Holy Spirit , but only an Act of prayer". ((op.cit. p. 51.)

(e). Conclusion.

It may have become clear , from what has already been said , that Luther believed there was more in the corporate prayer of the Church than in the accumulated , separate prayers of the members comprising the Church. He believed that , both in what all severally give and in what all unitedly receive , through this 'group consciousness' , there is an added presence in blessing experienced in social prayer which cannot be known by those who pray solely in private.

In a letter to Unruhe Luther speaks of the people whose "united prayers would have brought down a richer blessing upon you than that of

poor Martin alone". ('Letters of M.L.' tr. Currie. p. 361.) Again : as contrasted with the 'private' prayer , even the devil (as ever-present a reality to Luther in later as in earlier life) may be "driven out by the prayers of the whole Church , when all Christians join their supplications together in a prayer so powerful that it pierces the clouds". (Table Talk. p. 259.)

The same conviction meets us in his Manual of the Book of Psalms. "The prayer of the Church has great power ; it breaks through and victoriously overcomes all hatred , all perils . . . ; and faith is more powerful than any violence or storm of temptation" (re Ps. 13. p. 44.) In the Treatise on Good Works , we find this : "The Christian Church on earth has no greater power or work than . . . common prayer against everything that may oppose it . . . It is indeed not a question of the places and buildings in which we assemble , but only of this unconquerable prayer , that we pray it , and bring it before God as a truly common prayer". In his Explanation of the Apostles' Creed , he declares : "In this company of saints all things are common . . . and therefore all the godly prayers . . . of others are for my profit , and defend and establish me at all times". (Sel. Works. Vol.2. p. 372.)

It is , however , impossible to believe that the power of united prayer in Luther's view is entirely dependent upon mere numbers of petitioners. As in many of his statements regarding personal prayer , so in some of his statements about common prayer we do find an occasional suggestion that his whole attitude to prayer is somewhat 'primitive'. But , as we have already shown with regard to personal prayer, this is not so. It is equally untrue with regard to common prayer. There is no 'counting of heads in heaven' , as far as common prayer is concerned.

Luther , indeed , regards the power of united prayer as depending on something deeper than mere numbers. H.H. Farmer , we consider , states one side of Luther's position when he says : "If there is an added effectiveness in prayers which , without ceasing to be the expression of the individual's heart , are also corporate , it is because such prayers are prayers of fellowship , prayers of the Church. They rest on and carry the power of that to which all true prayer is directed, namely , that membership one of another in the love of God , which is the Kingdom". ('The World and God'. p. 264.)

Hence Luther can write to Justus Jonas : "Farewell , and teach your Church to hasten the Day of the Lord through their prayers. God will listen to the sighing for the day of redemption". (Letters of M.L. p. 434.) He 'will listen' , however , not so much because of the number of people praying , nor even their persistence in entreaty , but because of the moral and spiritual disposition which the petitioners show. It is that which shows a fitness on their part to receive the blessing asked. United supplication expresses unselfishness ; it is the elimination of merely individual and narrow desires. "What sense" , Luther says (as already noted) "is there in our coming together into a House of Prayer . . . if we scatter these prayers and everyone prays for himself ?"

Luther , in fact , recognises not only that the Church must at all points acknowledge the supremacy of the Word and its dependence upon the continuous intercessory work of Christ (alone) , but also that Prayer is the divinely appointed way whereby the Church maintains the reality of its responsible existence as a Body cooperating with the Head in His purpose of redemption. "Prayer" , Luther declares , "preserves the Church , and hitherto has done the best for the Church ; therefore we must continually pray". ('Table Talk'. CCCXXXIX.) "The whole lies in the nature of this prayer ('common') which is invincible. This is what we have to look to , and to take care that it be offered up by us all unanimously , that it may come to the ears of God". (Sel.Works. Vol.2. p. 497.)

The Church being , for Luther , the 'totality of all believers' , there was no question but that these believers all had a need of one another's life and prayers - because all were a part of the living Body of Christ. Moreover , the problem of God's answer to these prayers can be resolved only in the recognition of the Church's dependence upon its Head. 'To glorify God' is the criterion for common prayer as much as for private prayer. Hence , Luther feels that our own petitions , and our intercessions for others , can best be united in the supplication for the coming of the Kingdom of God which , as Heiler points out , "is the central subject of prayer in prophetic ideal religion". ('Prayer'. p. 296.) It was certainly central in Luther's religion. Of Psalm 102 , for instance , he says : "The whole sum and substance of this Psalm is 'Thy Kingdom come'. This Psalm may be used as a general prayer". (Man. of Book of Ps. p. 265.)

Since , for Luther , the Church was at once a community of saved people , and a community of people seeking salvation , "the common yearning for redemption seeks expression in common petitions , the common experience of redemption in praise and thanksgiving. Where there is a living consciousness that the 'many are one body' , individual prayer must expand into common prayer . . . Thus the prayer of congregational worship is rooted in the spirit of prophetic poetry". (F.Heiler: op.cit. p. 297.)

In short : the believer , saved by the Word , can no more prevent himself from individual prayer than the Church , created by the Word , can prevent itself from common prayer.

PART III. TYPES OF PRAYER.

Introductory Note.

Although we are concerned in this study principally with Luther's theology of prayer, rather than his practice of prayer, we shall find not only that it is difficult to keep the two rigidly separate, but also that many of his theological utterances cannot be fully understood except in the context of his devotional practice. His theology was essentially 'experimental'.

It will be found that a considerable part of his total theological thought can be focussed in a study of four distinct 'prayer-types': (1) Thanksgiving (and Adoration); (2) Confession; (3) Petition; (4) Intercession. These each illustrate and confirm many of the points made in Part I (Theological Pre-suppositions). The order in which they will be considered is itself a commentary upon his distinctive attitude to prayer - as will be shown.

While Luther laid great stress upon extempore prayer, it is worth noting that his revolt against the 'meritorious' type of prayer used so widely in Roman Catholicism did not lead him to reject prayer-forms altogether. (c.f. 'Lib. of a Christian Man'. p.74.) The Psalms and the Lord's Prayer were both regarded by him as indispensable aids to a more spontaneous prayer-utterance. Indeed, the Lord's Prayer, in particular, stands behind all types of prayer. The necessity of Thanksgiving, Confession, Petition, and Intercession alike is particularly underlined in this one Prayer. (Comm. on Ps. of Deg. p.8.) One of the 'tests' which Luther applied to each individual type of spontaneous prayer was simply the consideration of how far such prayer reflected truly one aspect of the 'pattern prayer'. (Erl. 21, 162.)

This is another way of insisting upon the objective factor as the sole ground of a prayer-experience. The 'Promise' of God stands behind every truly motivated prayer, whether it be Thanksgiving, Confession, Petition, or Intercession. We are to "look to the Promise of God", Luther says, and "the necessity of prayer". (Comm. on Ps. of Deg. p.7.)

It follows that Luther is only mildly concerned with what might be described as the formal characteristics of prayer. Whether, for instance, a prayer is formal or spontaneous is unimportant beside the consideration of whether both are prayed with a true apprehension of the Promise which lies behind every type of prayer. Luther was far more interested in sincerity than in originality. There is, indeed, comparatively little of the latter, since his prayers are frankly influenced by Biblical models.

Luther's attitude to 'externals' (gestures, clothing, etc.) likewise differs radically from the Roman view simply because salvation must always rest upon what God has promised to do (and has done), and not upon what man does. Ultimately, it does not matter much "whether we stand, or bend the knees, or fall to the ground.", because "God wills to save us not by . . . that which comes and springs from us, but by that which comes from elsewhere into us; not by that which originates in our

earth , but by that which comes down from heaven". (Sel. Works. Vol.2. p. 7.; and 'Lectures on Romans' - qu. by P. Watson: op. cit. p. 39) Unless the divine-human relationship is right , Thanksgiving or Confession or Petition or Intercession can in no way become more acceptable to God by virtue of the 'externals' in the context of which each might be offered.

"Since I alone am God , thou shalt place all thy confidence , trust , and faith on Me alone , and on no one else. For that is not to have a god if you call him god only with your lips , or worship him with the knees or bodily gestures . .". ('Works'. Vol.1. p. 194.) Such is Luther's explanation of the 1st Commandment. The only relevant consideration in securing the acceptability of any type of prayer is the Promise of God , and the faith through which alone it is appropriated. Externals or 'ceremonies' cannot take the place of faith ; rather "faith ought to use ceremonies as a rider does a horse". (Sel. Works. Vol.4. p. 61.)

In the following chapters , however , we shall not be concerned with the relation of faith to the 'externals' of prayer. Apart from such general statements as have been quoted , Luther gives the subject little prominence in his works. Rather is he concerned to show in his devotional practice how basic theological ideas such as the 'Promise of God' , faith , 'justification' , 'Gloria Dei' , are completely regulative of such practice. These and other ideas in relation to Thanksgiving , Confession , Petition , and Intercession will occupy us now in the remaining pages of Part III of our study.

Chapter VI. THANKSGIVING & PRAISE.

(a) Introduction.

It need not be assumed that , because Thanksgiving and Praise are the first 'types' of prayer to be treated in this section , they were in Luther's view the most important. A reading of Luther's works might indeed suggest the reverse ; for , in comparison with other types of prayer , thanksgiving and praise receive surprisingly meagre notice.

An argument from infrequency of mention , however , is dangerous. Luther says quite sufficient to assure us of the importance which he attached to praise and thanksgiving ; and we shall note below what his attitude was. Meantime , the opinion can be stated that , while mere coincidence may explain partly the meagre references in Luther to praise and thanksgiving , there are probably some definite historical reasons why this is so.

For instance , we may note , as a fact of common observation , that praise and thanksgiving are found far less frequently in later liturgies than in earlier ones. It is an observable historical trend that , as the assurance of salvation becomes weaker , the prayer that (for example) one might be saved becomes more frequent than the prayer acknowledging that one has been saved. In a word : petition tends to overshadow thanksgiving. The formulas of thanksgiving in the Pauline letters are a clear reflection of the prominent place given to such prayers in the early Christian community. But , by Reformation times , even despite the reformers' attempts to infuse the spirit of New Testament Christianity , this Pauline note had been largely lost.

That men should re-learn to pray for something (petition), before they could pray as a result of having received it (thanksgiving), was in Luther's day a practical religious need. Luther himself hammered with incredible persistence at the primary need for confession - the prayer for forgiveness. (vide 'Confession'.) One of his reasons for so doing was the obvious circumstance that , without the prayed-for experience being granted , the prayer of thanksgiving could have no practical religious relevance.

Luther was almost 'compelled' to draw (in his mind if not in his own prayer-experience) the convenient distinction which can be drawn with regard to 'faith' - as understood in the New Testament : there is the faith which asks , and the faith which accepts. Heiler has reminded us of Calvin's theological axiom that "the two parts of prayer are petition and thanksgiving". (op.cit. p.271.) "Orationis duae sunt partes; petitio et gratiarum actio". (Corpus Ref. 1 , 917.) But this is no less Luther's axiom.

In his 'Table Talk' he declares : "The Scriptures show two manner of sacrifices acceptable to God. The first is called a sacrifice of thanks or praise . . . when we thank God from our hearts for the unspeakable benefits which . . . are laid before us , and bestowed upon us in Christ ; when we praise and glorify Him etc. . . 'He that offereth thanks praiseth Me'. Secondly , when a sorrowful and troubled heart . . . calls

upon Him in true and upright faith, seeks help of Him, and waits patiently upon Him. . . 'Call upon Me in the time of need, so will I deliver thee, and thou shalt praise Me'." (p. 47.) This two-fold division of Prayer is fundamental to Luther's whole approach; and if it is less obvious in his personal practice of religion than in his formal theology, this is no reason for minimising its importance as a key to the understanding not only of Luther's piety but also^{of} that of the age in which he lived.

(b) The Relation between Praise & Thanksgiving.

Before proceeding to an examination of the relative place and importance of Thanksgiving in the general 'scheme' of Prayer, we can appropriately note here a further distinction which Luther draws (again, more in theory than practice) between Thanksgiving, on the one hand, and Praise on the other. As this distinction will itself help us to understand something more of the place which Luther assigns to Thanksgiving in Prayer, it is doubly desirable that we should examine it here, before taking up the thread of the argument reached at the end of the preceding subsection.

Evangelical piety is quite familiar with the simple distinction which Luther draws, i.e. Praise refers to what God is; thanksgiving refers to what God has done. But it is not generally realised just how much is owed to Luther for his insistence (in an age whose view of religion was strongly utilitarian) that God's Being was primary, and His 'benefits' secondary. Frequently he criticised those who exalted "the gift above the Giver, and heaven above God", as in his sermon concerning 'two sorts of men'. (Select Works. Vol.1. p. 425.) And this Luther deemed to be a fair criticism of Romanism in general. In the same work Luther speaks of those who "signify that, if there were no hell and heaven set before us, and no hope of reward from the hand of God, we ought neither to love Him nor praise Him for His benefits". Fantastic as such an idea sounds to modern evangelical thought, there is little doubt but that it was indeed strongly held by a vast number of Luther's contemporaries. To Luther, it was an intolerable attitude.

Nothing could be more categorical a rejection of that viewpoint than this: "We are not to believe in, hope in, cleave to, or glory in, any gifts from God, lest we should commit fornication with them . . . but in God Himself the Giver, and in Him only". (Comm. on 1st 22 Psalms. Select Wks. Vol.1. p. 251.) Theoretically, praise is on a higher plane than thanksgiving, since, in thanksgiving, man's thoughts still circle around himself to some extent.

It has already been noted in several connections - and will be noted in several more - that, for Luther, "to give glory to God" is the fundamental motive of all prayer. Thanksgiving he regards as man's giving to God the glory for what He has done for him; and praise as man's giving to God the glory for what He is in Himself. And if both are made in the right spirit, it is odious to regard the one as the 'better' prayer. In one sense only is Praise on a higher plane than

Thanksgiving, in that it is chronologically prior. To know God for what He is, remains, for Luther, the all-important preliminary. Only then can He be known, and thanked, for what He does. To know precisely the nature of the God he is to address - whether in Thanksgiving or any other type of prayer - is man's primary devotional obligation.

"Der beste Anfang und Vorred", Luther declares, speaking of the order of prayer, "ist dasz man wohl wisse, wie man nennen, ehren, handeln soll, den man bitten will, und wie man sich gegen ihn erzeigen soll, dasz man ihn gnädig und geneigt mache zu hören". (Erl. 31, 163.) In a word, 'Praise' - whether expressed verbally or not - is the primary form of prayer. To 'know how one must call Him' was Luther's constant devotional quest; and as he progressed in that life-long quest so did each specific type of prayer broaden and deepen in significance for him.

The contemporary idea of a prayer of thanksgiving, for instance, was not Luther's mature idea. Unless God is revealed and known as 'Father', He can "only be preached and known as a rewarder and dealer in good works, and as one who is to ~~maximize~~ look upon us according to our religion and holiness. But this is not to praise the Father, but ourselves and our own merits . . ." (Sel. Wks. Vol. 2. p. 15.) God's 'benefits', Luther insisted, will be rightly appraised only in consequence of right appraisal of the Giver.

Indeed Luther believes that, unless we understand clearly the nature of God (as revealed in Christ), we cannot understand what His benefits are - far less offer Him thanks. Speaking on Psalm 22, he remarks that David was 'stirred up to thanksgiving, which the inward joy of heart compelleth him unto'; and he continues: "For such are thankful indeed which do embrace the graces and gifts of God, and rejoice in the Giver. But such as feel not this joy, albeit they set forth this psalm with piping and singing . . . yet are they unthankful because they do not understand these benefits". (Comm. on Ps. of Degrees. p. 49.)

In the forefront of Luther's thought is the conception of God as the 'Hearer of Prayer'. For, without a personal conviction and experience of 'answered prayer', the very possibility of the prayer of thanksgiving (or any other prayer) is automatically excluded. Luther was fully aware that to pour out one's soul in self-forgetting gratitude to Another was not a 'natural' human response. So much so that he regarded the genuine prayer of thanksgiving as a conclusive proof that God does, in fact, answer prayer. To offer such a prayer is, quite simply, 'giving glory to God'. It is the confession of humility and utter dependence, which lies behind all acceptable human approach to God, and which was so noticeably absent from contemporary Romanism.

While the above distinction, then, between Praise and Thanksgiving is fully valid for Luther, we must conclude that, in Luther's own view and practice, true thanksgiving does take account of the Giver as well as the gift. In the remaining portion of our discussion, which centres on the place of Thanksgiving in prayer, this fact

must be continually borne in mind. If we appear to be speaking specifically of 'thanksgiving', it will not be to the exclusion of 'praise'. At no time does Luther forget his own statement of the Christian's complementary obligation: "God . . . asks only that we acknowledge Him for our God, and thank Him for His gifts". ('Table Talk. p. 45.)

(c) The Place of Thanksgiving in Prayer.

It has already been noted in (a) that, for Luther as well as for Calvin, the two broad divisions of prayer are Thanksgiving and Petition. Luther frequently refers to them as the 'two manner of sacrifices' (e.g. 'Table Talk. p. 47.) We must now note what relative importance they had in Luther's view.

It is a matter of simple observation that, whether or not he considered Thanksgiving of intrinsically more importance than Petition, Luther did approach Prayer generally through the former. The evidence upon which such a conviction is based is ample. In his exposition of St. John, chapter 17, he speaks of how important it is that we "give thanks unto God, and that, with an honoured thanksgiving we extol and enumerate the blessings He has already bestowed upon us, as Christ does here". Significantly he continues: "then are to be introduced prayers and a mention of our necessity". (Sel.Wks. Vol.2. p.10.)

This order of prayer is not, of course, unanimously endorsed. In our own day, Dr. Brunner has declared that "Prayer proceeds from petition to praise . . .". ('Our Faith'. p. 97.) But elsewhere Luther categorically states that 'sacrifice' comes before 'petitioning'. (Sel. Works. Vol.4. p.316). And in the same work - a commentary on the Psalms - speaking of Psalm 20, verse 3, he defines what this 'sacrifice' is, namely: "a contrite heart and the confession of sin", together with "praising Him and giving Him thanks". (ibid. p. 318.)

That Thanksgiving must be considered as chronologically prior is confirmed in several other places. Luther says, for instance, that "All the blessings which we enjoy are God's" - and this confession ought to be the conscious basis of prayer for further blessings. ". . . for the which cause also we ought to pray that He would preserve and increase them (blessings) both unto ourselves and others. This is the way of rightly entering upon prayer, and of making a proper access and approach whereby to gain the favour of God, that He might willingly and freely hear us". (Sel.Wks. Vol.2. p. 10.) Again, he declares: "The foremost method and virtue of a true prayer is that God should be thanked and His benefits extolled". (Weim. 44, 81.)

In a word, 'thankfulness' is an indispensable condition of acceptable prayer. Luther firmly believed, and firmly declared to his generation, that, without becoming deeply aware of the obligations under which God the Father had placed him in making it possible for him at all to approach God, man could not possibly engage in any true kind of prayer whatsoever. Whatever else faith might be, it was at least of the nature of gratitude.

(d) The Religious Significance of Thanksgiving.

It has been justly claimed that Luther did not find a sufficiently sensitive awareness in contemporary religion that prayer was "an expression of the faith which lays hold of the reconciliation and filial relation offered us by God's grace, and which makes joyous gratitude the normal and fundamental need of the Christian". (J.Gottschick. 'Ethik', 137.) Certainly Luther was not blind to the existence of prayers of thanksgiving in the Mediaeval liturgies - as in all liturgies; but he did fail to find in contemporary piety a really living expression of the consciousness of redemption which, to him, was the prime motivating factor in public worship, as well as in private devotion.

The 'proper response' to Christ as 'Gift' is 'thanks'; the 'proper response' to Christ as 'Example' is 'despair'. The latter response, in Luther's view, was what characterised contemporary Romanism. No doubt the saving acts of God formed an essential subject of liturgical thanksgiving; but the personal relationship between Saviour and saved was often of the flimsiest.

This fact explains why Luther's religion is a joyous experience; and why the note of joy is relatively absent from Romanist expressions of religion. Only a superficial reader can regard Luther as the exponent of a severe, morbid type of religion. Thanksgiving, to him, was not so much a duty and an obligation (though that element is never under-estimated) as the inevitable outcome of realising oneself as a Son of God. Luther's conviction is that "if we could be fully persuaded that we are under grace . . . then doubtless we shall be joyful and thankful to God for this inestimable gift". (Comm. on Gal. p.344.)

In fact, Luther regarded thanksgiving as one sign of 'regeneration', as one of those 'works' which should follow upon regeneration. The contrast with Romanism is again evident. "Those works (i.e. following upon regeneration) are not such as impious Popery exhorts unto - to make vows of peregrination, to enter monasteries", but, quite simply, to "give thanks unto a God so good and so merciful, to extend His gifts . . . These are the principal works which testify that the tree is changed". (Sol.Wks. Vol.1. p. 164.)

This intensely 'evangelical' basis which Luther gives to the human response to God (a response evoked exclusively through man's recognition in Christ of a 'gracious God') is frequently illustrated in his works by the close link which he maintains between assurance of forgiveness and the prayer of thanksgiving. "Call upon God, give thanks to Him, praise Him . . . These are good works indeed, which flow out of this faith and this cheerfulness conceived in the heart, for that we have remission of sins freely by Christ". (Comm. on Gal. p.110.) In the Commentary on the Psalms of Degrees, he declares: "These are great causes of joy and gladness, to have access unto the Lord . . . which will hear us, which will deliver us in the time of trouble, which will forgive our sins". (p. 53.) Again: "Great cause have we to be thankful unto God for this inestimable benefit, that we now know the doctrine of the Gospel to be the doctrine of consolation and salvation". (ibid. p.113.)

In point of fact, both Luther's prayers of thanksgiving and those of praise (where they can be separated at all) have their ultimate motive-power and 'sanction' from this Gospel which is the 'doctrine of consolation and salvation'. They are essentially Christological. To know God as essentially a 'promising God' gives rise to 'Praise'; to know Christ as the mediating Saviour gives rise to 'thanksgiving'. Such prayers are grounded ultimately in the Gospel which, as Luther himself says, "commandeth us to behold not our own good works, our own imperfections, but God the Promiser, and Christ the Mediator". (Comm. on Gal. p. 352.)

One of the reasons for the poverty of Praise and Thanksgiving in popular religion was, of course, that men did behold their 'good works and their imperfections' rather than the Promiser (the only valid Object of men's praise) and the Mediator (the only valid Object of their thanks). We have already noted this as the reason why the Church's Sacraments were unable to bring, 'ex opere operato', a sense of worship of the Deity, and of thanksgiving to Him. To acknowledge the Word and Sacraments for what they really are (vide Chap. IV. b.), is the only way of finding the 'consolation and salvation' upon which the prayer of Thanksgiving feeds.

Both the Word and Sacraments speak of a 'gracious God'. A Church, however, which tended to encourage the "do ut des" attitude to religion, which tended to stress man's work as much as God's Word, which tended to distort the idea of Sacrament altogether by insisting on 'opus operatum', could know little of such a God. It is this contemporary Church that Luther has in mind when he gives, in contrast, his own viewpoint: Christians everywhere "should rejoice and be merry, having peace and a good conscience by His free grace and mercy. . . . In a Christian, heaviness can take no place if in his heart he do acknowledge Baptism, the Word, . . . the mercy of God". (Comm. on Ps. of Degrees. p. 278f.)

For Luther, the Sacraments - Baptism no less than Communion - were in no sense the instruments of an all-powerful ecclesiastical hierarchy, but the tokens of a beneficent God. Both Word and Sacraments, in fact, are the expressions or evidences of God's favour, upon the assurance of which, alone, the prayer of thanksgiving takes its rise. The judgment might easily be made, as we would here make it, that Luther's emphasis upon the Sacraments is at least partly explained by this practical devotional purpose which he intended them to fulfil - the purpose of evoking the prayer of thanksgiving. It is hardly mere coincidence that, as Luther's early followers modified their master's emphasis upon the Sacraments, so did the element of Thanksgiving in their worship receive a less prominent place.

(c) Conclusion.

It has been noted that Luther's prayers of thanksgiving have an ultimately Christological basis. This must not, however, be taken to mean that the subjects of his thanksgiving are concerned exclusively with the 'great saving acts of God'. Luther's whole attitude

to life was governed by a profound recognition that the whole of it was God's gift. Hence, we find temporal and spiritual benefits acknowledged with the same religious fervour - just as we find Luther praying with equal confidence for both temporal and spiritual benefits (vide 'Petition'.)

This does not mean, of course, that Luther recognised no 'order of priority'. His principle of 'conditional' and 'unconditional' petition, which will be discussed in the appropriate chapter, is paralleled, in the sphere of Thanksgiving, by his simple distinction between the benefits of the 'first table' and those of the 'second'. In his Commentary on the Psalms of Degrees, Luther puts his viewpoint thus: "We ought first to rejoice for these small benefits which we enjoy by the second table, whereby our goods and our bodies are in safety. (but) small benefits I call them in comparison with those which we enjoy by the first table, whereby God so abundantly openeth the treasures and riches of His mercy towards us . . . in giving us His Word, faith, and the Holy Ghost, in hearing our prayers". (p. 49.)

Alike, however, in the acknowledgement of 'small' or 'large' benefits, the one who offers the prayer of thanksgiving is 'giving glory to God'. It is a man's attitude in thanksgiving, rather than the specific subjects of the thanksgiving, which gives content to any act in prayer of 'glorifying God'. Moreover, Luther clearly regarded the prayer of thanksgiving as one conclusive sign of a true prayer-life. He is in complete agreement with the Apostle Paul who, Luther comments, "counteth it for a special grace of God, not only to have the gifts of God, but also to acknowledge them, to delight and rejoice in them, and to be thankful unto God for them". (ibid. p. 46.) True faith, let us repeat, is of the nature of gratitude.

And finally, the observation must be made that, for Luther, this 'gratitude' did not mean simply those isolated occasions on which he was compelled to Thanksgiving. The ideal which Luther put before his contemporaries was that of Thanksgiving as the habitual reference to God in all the circumstances of life, so that that life might become thoroughly theo-centric, with God for its primary and continual thought. As Heiler has pointed out, Luther's ideal was a life of prayer; the ideal of a continuous devotional life. (~~this~~ op.cit. p.105.) It is a sign of primitive religion that man comes to God in prayer - whether to ask or to give thanks - only under special circumstances. That Luther sought to counteract this tendency in contemporary religion was one of the modes in which he expressed the dynamism of his own prophetic nature. He made 'Thanksgiving' - as every other type of prayer - nothing less than the "total spiritual outgoing of our entire personality . . . , groping after the full expression and perfect realisation of itself". (R.H. Coates : op.cit. p.18.)

Chapter VII. CONFESSION.

(a) Introduction.

Few religious personalities of any age have emphasized the necessity of, and the large place for, the prayer of confession more than Martin Luther. His works reveal the sharpest possible contrast between the contemporary Roman practice of confession and his own practice; and it is no coincidence that, ever since Luther's day, Reformed piety has, as a rule, placed much more stress on the prayer of confession than the Roman Catholic Church. This is true even when we take into account the 'machinery of the Confessional'. Certainly few liturgies omit all reference to confession, but in Reformed liturgies it occupies a central place. That this is so is, in no small measure, due to Luther's influence - as may become obvious after a consideration of the following themes.

(b) Confession and the Word.

The prayer of confession, no more and no less than any other type of prayer, is inevitably bound up with the petitioner's view of the divine nature - with 'the Word'. Indeed, the contrast between Luther's prayers of confession and those of Romanism is simply and adequately explained by understanding their divergence with regard to the Being of God.

In his Commentary on Galatians, for example, Luther is at pains to point out that "Christ is no cruel Exactor, but a Forgiver of the sins of the whole world. Wherefore, if thou be a sinner, as indeed we all are, set not Christ upon the rainbow as a judge . . . but take hold of this true definition, namely, that Christ . . . is a person not that terrifieth . . . not that condemneth us of sin . . . but hath given Himself for our sins, and with one oblation hath put away the sins of the whole world. . . . Learn this definition diligently, and especially so exercise this pronoun 'our' that this one syllable, being believed, may swallow up all thy sins". (p. 24.)

The objective and subjective elements in religion, in fact, are nowhere better combined in Luther's theology, and nowhere better illustrated, than in his teaching regarding confession and forgiveness. But the objective element is still primary. "thou must not follow thine own feeling . . . If I be a sinner, then am I guilty of everlasting death. But against this feeling thou must wrestle and say 'Although I feel myself utterly overwhelmed and swallowed up in sin, and my heart telleth me that God is offended and angry with me, yet in very deed it is not true, but that mine own sense and feeling so judgeth'. The Word of God, which in these errors I ought to follow, and not mine own sense, teacheth a far other thing, namely, that 'God is near unto them that are of a troubled heart, and saveth them that are of a humble spirit'". (ibid. p. 445.)

For Luther, faith in the historical deed of God, in the atoning death of Christ, was what offered an objective guarantee and pledge of

the forgiving and justifying grace of God. This 'guarantee' is conveyed through a 'Word' which, to Luther, (as we have noted in Chap. II, subsection 1) is always primarily a Word of 'Promise'. Hence, as far as the prayer of confession is concerned, Luther can say: "The forgiveness of sins is declared only in God's Word, and there we must seek it, for it is grounded on God's Promises. God forgives thee thy sins, not because thou feelest them and art sorry, for this sin itself produces, without deserving, but He forgives thy sins because He is merciful, and because He has promised to forgive, for Christ's sake". (Table Talk. p. 114.)

In his 'Commentary on the Psalms of Degrees', Luther asks the rhetorical question: "Why is the remission of sins promised, if sinners may not enjoy the same?" (p. 235.) Here, as often, he is criticising the Roman idea that man should be in doubt as to forgiveness. But, while he puts such stress on the Word of Promise as the only acceptable basis for Confession, Luther is most careful to make it clear that this Word of Promise which speaks of God receiving sinners applies only to those who have repented. The subjective aspect of confession - clearly neglected, or at least underrated in contemporary Catholicism - must also be stressed. "There is all the difference in the world", Luther says, "between 'agnitum peccatum', attended by repentance, and 'velle peccare', which is an inspiration of the devil". (Table Talk. p. 116.)

Of course, as Luther knew from his own experience, only the penitent can be expected to see the Word of God for what it is. The 'faith' which Luther demanded was a 'penitent faith'. For him, there was no other kind. Hence, in the 'Babylon. Captiv.', he criticises those who "make no mention of faith", and declares: "A contrite heart is a great matter indeed, and can proceed only from an earnest faith in the divine promises and threats - a faith which, contemplating the unshakeable truth of God, makes the conscience to tremble, terrifies and bruises it, and when it is thus contrite, raises it up again, consoles and preserves it. Thus the truth of threatening is the cause of contrition, and the truth of the promise is the cause of consolation, when they are believed; and by this faith man merits remission of sins". (p. 207.)

Not only is it the penitent man who alone apprehends the Word of Promise, but it is this Word of Promise which gives any value at all to the penitence. In both cases, the Word, the objective truth is primary. "Whatever good there is in penitence", Luther says, "is due, not to the diligence with which we reckon up our sins, but to the truth of God (and our faith)". (ibid. p. 209.) But the truth of God - the 'Word of Promise' - does not just give any value which may be attached to a man's penitence; it alone has the power to induce such penitence. As Luther points out, in words which clearly echo his own experience, men should "look with much more earnest attention to the truth of God . . . than to the multitude of their own sins, which, if they be looked at apart from the truth of God, are more likely to renew and increase the desire for sin, than to produce contrition". (ibid. p. 208.)

Indeed, so central is Luther's conception of the Word of Promise as it applies to Confession, that he claims, in effect, that the genuine prayer of confession must be regarded as a sign of man's reverting to the efficacy of Baptism - which is, in itself, a powerful pledge of that Word. "When we arise out of our sins and exercise penitence", Luther writes, "we are simply reverting to the efficacy of Baptism, and to faith in it, whence we had fallen; and we return to the promise then made to us, but which we had abandoned through our sin. . . . This is the meaning of that obscure saying, that Baptism is the first of sacraments, and the foundation of them all, without which we can possess none of the others". ('Babyl. Capt.' p. 184.)

By his use of the word 'all', in the above quotation, it is clear that Luther, at the time of writing, still regards Penance, as well as Communion, as a sacrament. This, however, only serves to make more significant his emphasis upon Baptism as the 'first of sacraments'. In the latter there is adequate evidence of the divine readiness to hear the prayer of confession, as well as the pledge of forgiveness - without any need for a 'specialised sacrament' such as Penance. The 'Word' is pre-eminently a Word of forgiveness, as manifested both in Baptism and Communion, which means, for Luther, that an appeal to that Word is the only ground of acceptance of man's heartfelt confession.

"For him who is about to go to confession", Luther says in his 'Discussion of Confession', "it is before all things necessary that he should not place his trust in his confession, but that, with complete fullness of faith, he put his trust only in the most gracious promise of God; to wit, he must be altogether certain that He who has promised pardon to the man who shall confess his sins, will most faithfully fulfil His promise". (Works. Vol.1 p. 81.) This, for Luther, is the evangelical principle which must lie behind all confession, whether public or private.

The basic contrast in Luther's theology between God's truth and man's works, belief in God's promise with unbelief, giving glory to God with self-glorification, is nowhere seen to better advantage than in his attitude to the Word as it applies to Confession. A most convenient summary of his whole position, where this contrast is set in high relief, is to be found in the following passage, which will fittingly conclude this sub-section:

"It will be of no little profit to a penitent first of all to recall to mind his own baptism, and to remember with confidence that divine promise which he had deserted. God is faithful to His promise, and in Baptism I received the sign of that promise. We see then how rich a Christian, or baptised man, is; since, even if he would, he cannot lose his salvation by any sins, however great, unless he refuses to believe; for no sins whatever can condemn him, but unbelief alone. All other sins, if faith in the divine promise made to the baptised man stands firm or is restored, are swallowed up in a moment through that same faith; yea, through the truth of God, because He cannot deny Himself, if thou confess Him, and cleave believingly to His promises. . . . Whereas,

confession of sins and satisfaction for sins , and every effort that can be devised by man , will desert thee at thy need , and will make thee more miserable than ever , if thou forgettest this divine truth and puffest thyself up with such things as these. For whatever work is wrought apart from faith in the truth of God is vanity and vexation of spirit". (Babyl. Capt. p. 184.)

(c) Justification and Forgiveness.

In a word , Luther's criticism of Romanist prayers of confession was ultimately based upon his conviction that they rested upon an utterly inadequate doctrine of 'justification'. "In their confessions they make no mention of faith or the merits of Christ , but they teach and set forth the satisfactions and merits of men". (Comm. on Gal. ed. Middleton. Chap. ii. verse 18.)

This is , perhaps , a rather hard generalisation on Luther's part , concerning the character of contemporary religion , but there is little doubt that prayers of confession were widely offered 'apart from faith in the truth of God . . . ' , and that the 'satisfactions and merits of men' loomed large in Roman thought. Luther's advice is plain : "When thou hearest of satisfactions , do thou determine to speak no other satisfaction than that which is the true satisfaction . . . the satisfaction of faith - that Jesus Christ bore thy sins. . . . But what does the Monk ? . . . performs many works , devises many ways whereby he endeavours to serve God ". (Select Works. Vol. 1. p. 137.) His whole object in so doing , Luther maintains , is to "cleanse himself from his sins and appease God. And what else is this but to deny Christ , who was for this end appointed of God , that He might make satisfaction for us ?" (ibid.)

For Luther , one of the clearest evidences that Romanism hold an inadequate doctrine of justification lay in the commonly accepted belief that one should be pure before approaching God at all. He , in contrast , held that the word 'mercy' had little meaning or purport if those who pray are clean , and have no need of it. Modestly , he says: "I do not profess to be proficient in this exercise (prayer). This , however , I confess , that I have often . . pronounced these words 'have mercy upon me, o God' very coldly , because I was offended with my own worthiness ; and yet the Holy Spirit prevailed , who suggested to me , in what state soever thou art , thou must certainly pray. For God does not wish to be prayed to and hear prayers according to thy worthiness, but according to His own mercy". (Sel Wks. Vol. 1 re Ps. 51. p. 69f.)

In his Commentary on Matthew vii. 7. , Luther shows how completely he has abandoned the 'meritorious' attitude to prayers of confession. "Ich armer Mensch , voll aller Sünde , der ich an mir , an meinem Werken und an allen meinen Kräften verzweifle , habe nichts das ich tun konnte , denn dasz ich bete und deine Barmherzigkeit anrufe". (I , sinful creature that I am , despairing of myself , of my works , and of all my resources , can do nothing but pray and beseech Thy mercy). (Erl. 43 , 290.) In the Commentary on Galatians , he records a typical example of the Prayer of Confession which he now rejects :

"Therefore when I prayed or when I said mass , I used to add this in the end , 'O Lord Jesus , I come unto Thee , and I pray Thee that these burdens and this straitness of my rule and religion may be a full recompense for all my sins". (p. 129.)

Luther's doctrine , as Protestantism has realised for several centuries , is not simply 'justification by faith alone' , but also 'through Christ alone'. Luther's criticism of Romanist prayers of confession , as of so many aspects of contemporary religion , was that the 'glory and name of Justifier and Saviour is taken from Christ'. The monkish absolution which he quotes in the same work (Comm. on Gal.) is a typical illustration of the Romanist refusal to acknowledge an exclusively Christ-centred doctrine of justification. "God forgive thee , my brother. The merit of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ , and of blessed Mary , always a virgin , and of all the saints ; the merit of thine Order , the straitness of thy religion , the humility of thy confession , the contrition of thine heart , be unto thee available for the remission of thy sins , the increase of desert and grace , and the reward of everlasting life". (ibid.)

For Luther , in fact , faith in God's exclusive power to forgive runs parallel to God's exclusive power to justify. Without justification by (Christo-centric) faith , there can be no acceptable prayer of confession ; and , conversely , the true prayer of confession is the token and expression of this justification.

Luther does not , of course , deny that the believer is as great a sinner as the unbeliever. But he does most strenuously deny that man's christo-centric faith cannot affect the divine attitude to the sinner. "The error of the schoolmen" , Luther insists , "is most pernicious , which do distinguish sins according to the fact , and not according to the person. He that believeth hath as great sin as the unbeliever ; but to him that believeth , it is forgiven and not imputed ; to the unbeliever it is not pardoned , but imputed". (ibid. p. 486.) In reality 'saints' are 'sinners' , but "in the eyes of a merciful God they are just , for God considers them according to His mercy. 'For behold , every saint is a sinner and prays for his sins. Thus the just man begins with accusation of self'". (R.Fife: 'Young Luther'. p. 189.)

This is exactly where Luther began. "Siehe , so wahr ist's , dasz ich vor dir ein Sünder bin , dasz auch Sünde meine Natur , mein anhebendes Wesen , meine Empfängnis ist , geschweige denn die Worte , Werke und Gedanken und nachfolgend Leben. Ein böser Baum bin ich , von Natur ein Kind des Zornes und der Sünde ; und darum solange als dieselbe Natur und Wesen in mir und an uns bleibet , sind wir Sünder und müssen sagen : Erlass uns unsere Schuld" ('Yes , indeed it's true that I'm a sinner in Thy sight ; moreover that sin is my very nature , the dominant force in my life , my prison - not to mention my words and works and thoughts and subsequent life. I am a diseased tree , by nature a child of wrath and of sin ; therefore , as long as the self-same nature and reality remain in me , and close by us , we are sinners and obliged to say : Lay not our guilt to our charge' - Erl. 47. 325.)

This 'accusation of self' Luther regards as the negative aspect of 'giving glory to God'. So that, when Luther declares "God be praised, we can pray; for we seek peace and forgiveness, which God will grant if we humbly confess our sins and seek His glory", ('Letters of M.L.' p. 328f.), we are to regard the last two phrases as comprising a parallelism, rather than stating two separate facts. Confession is one of the principle ways of 'glorying in God' as well as 'giving God His glory'. Prayer, in fact, springs out of man's humility (regarding prayer, for the moment, from man's angle). Luther's own change of approach from that of stressing the 'righteousness of man' to that of stressing the Righteousness of God is nowhere better seen than in his mature theology and practice of prayer. Or, as one writer has put it, "The change from pride to humility represents an abiding line of thought in Luther's theology. It corresponds to the change from ego-centric self-sufficiency to theo-centric faith". (E.M. Carlson: op.cit. p.178.)

"The most acceptable service we can do", Luther claims, ". . . and which alone He desires of us, is that He be praised of us; but He is not praised unless He be first loved; He is not loved unless He be first bountiful and does well; He does well when He is gracious; gracious He is when He forgives sins. Now who are those that love Him? They are that small flock of the faithful who acknowledge such graces and know that through Christ they have forgiveness of their sins". ('Table Talk'. p.45.) Without such acknowledgement, both 'justification' and forgiveness are impossible. It is only the justified man who is spiritually capable of believing in forgiveness (as the New Testament understands it). The same is true of the Church as a whole. "The whole Church", Luther says, "which indeed is holy (i.e. because she is 'justified'), prayeth that her sins may be forgiven her, and believeth the forgiveness of sins". (Comm. on Gal. p. 487.)

Luther's re-emphasis upon a theology of 'Just As I Am' is one of his principle contributions to religion. In contrast, for example, to the 'Turk and Papist' who, "when they begin to feel their sins and unworthiness . . . they tremble and despair", a true Christian says "I believe in Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour, who gave Himself for my sins, and is at God's right hand, and intercedes for me; fall I into sin, as alas, oftentimes I do, I am sorry for it; I rise again and am an enemy unto sin". . . "Christ is in the faithful, although they have and feel and confess sins, and with sorrow of heart complain thereof; therefore sins do not separate Christ from those that believe". ('Table Talk'. p. 143.)

The essence of Luther's view of Justification and Forgiveness, as these are related to Confession, can be quite simply summarised in his own powerful statement: "Our righteousness is much more plentiful than our sin, because the holiness and righteousness of Christ our Mediator doth far exceed the sin of the whole world; and the forgiveness of sins which we have through Him is so great, so large, so infinite, that it easily swalloweth up all sins, so that we walk according to the Spirit". (Comm. on Gal. p. 478.)

(d). Confession and Religious Experience.

For Luther, this 'forgiveness of sins which we have through Him' is ultimately the basis for all true Christian experience. "Forgiveness of sins is that heaven under the which we dwell through our trust and confidence in the merit of Christ . . . For without remission of sins or knowledge of grace, what have we to rest upon? . . . They therefore that put not their trust therein alone, that by the death of Christ their sins are taken away . . . must needs perish. For this only do the Scriptures set forth that our life resteth wholly and alone in the remission of sins". (Comm. on Ps. of Degrees. p. 232f.)

The prayer of confession, for Luther, was the foundation of true devotional life because it, supremely, was the evidence that the petitioner had found a 'gracious God'. It is within the context of sin forgiven that a man's religious experience can begin to deepen and expand. Luther speaks, for instance, of those who "because they lift not up themselves proudly against God, but with a broken and contrite heart humbly acknowledging their sins and resting wholly upon the benefit of the Mediator Christ, they come forth into the presence of God, and pray that for His sake their sins may be forgiven them, God spreadeth over them an infinite heaven of grace, and doth not impute unto them their sins, for Christ's sake". (Comm. on Gal. p. 497.)

Man enters a 'state of grace' when he turns away from self to God. This, however, does not mean that man can, at any time, dispense with the necessity of confession. Luther never equates pardon with the complete abandonment of sin by the penitent. (We are reminded, though, by one author of Luther's distress, at an earlier stage of his religious experience, when he could not understand why his sins were not remitted, despite the fact that God had promised to pardon those who believed in Him. At the time in question, Luther simply failed to realise that the forgiveness was real enough, but was in no way identical with the suppression of sin. c.f. R.Fife. op. cit. p.190.) In his mature years Luther never succumbed to the temptation of adopting a false 'perfectionism'. 'Christocentrism' was never allowed to become a synonym for sinlessness.

In his 'Reinterpretation of Luther', E.M. Carlsen offers a forceful summary of Luther's position in this matter. "In accepting God's free pardon, man becomes theocentric. This does not mean that, having accepted forgiveness, man is from that point on wholly governed by God. It is just in the act of acceptance that one surrenders his egocentricity and allows his life to be dominated by God. For Luther, justification, forgiveness, renewal . . . are all daily ongoing facts about Christian life". (p. 93.) The same author goes the length of stating categorically: "The point upon which everything in Christianity is focussed for Luther is the daily forgiveness of sins". (ibid. p.119.) He goes on to claim that, without a realisation of the above fact, it is difficult to understand Luther's theological position fully, and the great contrast he presented to the formal non-evangelical position of contemporary Romanism. "One cannot read far in any of the Swedish studies without being impressed by the centrality of forgiveness in the interpretation of Luther". (ibid. p. 182.)

Part of the reason for the centrality of forgiveness in Luther's own experience and theology is that , for him , man is continually living in a state of tension between judgment and grace. The Christian is 'simul iustus et peccator'. Indeed , sin and grace should not really be considered as two historically (or even psychologically) distinguishable stages in man's experience , but as two elements involved in the same moment of experience. The prayer of confession is , simultaneously, a bestowal of forgiveness. Or , as Dr. Mackinnon points out , quoting Luther's Werke, iii. 289-290 : "To judge and condemn oneself ('se iudicare') is to justify God ('Deum iustificare') i.e. pronounce Him true and just ; whereas to justify self is to judge and condemn God". (op. cit. Vol.1. p. 163.)

Luther's insistence that the elements in evangelical experience should not be separated historically , or otherwise , is illustrated , for example , in the 'Consolations' , where he claims that "The moment thou confessest that thou sufferest for thy sins justly , thou art just and holy , as was the thief on the right hand. For the confession of sin , as it is truth , sanctifies and justifies ; and thus , from the moment of this confession , thou sufferest not for thy sins , but for thy innocence ; for a just man cannot suffer , but innocently ; and thou art made just upon thy confession of thy deserved sufferings and sins". (Sel. Works. Vol. 2. p. 145.)

Again , in his Exposition of Psalm 51 , he points out that "even our very confession . . . is a gift which we receive elsewhere". (Sel. Works. Vol. 1. p.186.) Strictly speaking , in fact , it is as inaccurate to say that God's grace follows man's confession , as it is to say that God's grace precedes it. Confession of sin is an essential part of true repentance ; and confession of sin is an evidence of the grace of God. The one statement is the complement of the other.

Luther , indeed , in strong contrast to the somewhat 'mechanical' conception of grace in Roman Catholicism , preserves 'grace' and 'sin' as parallel ideas , inextricably woven together. It is no accident that he can define the 'proper subject of theology' as "Man guilty on account of sin , and lost ; and God the Justifier and Saviour of man as sinner". (Sel. Works. Vol. 1. p.65. - re Ps. 51.) Luther found in the Word of God a dual announcement with regard to repentance. In the 51st Psalm , for instance , he finds the 'doctrine concerning true repentance : "There are in repentance two things - the knowledge of sin and the knowledge of grace. Or , to use terms of more common acceptance , the fear of God , and a trust in His mercy. These two parts of repentance David so sets forth in this prayer of his . . . In the beginning of the psalm we see him labouring under the knowledge of his sin , and the burden of his conscience. In the end he comforts himself from his trust in the goodness of God". (ibid. p.55.) But this terminology must not obscure the fact that , for Luther , the 'knowledge of sin and the knowledge of grace' is one knowledge ; and the 'fear of God, and a trust in His mercy' is one experience.

There is a further reason why Luther lays so much stress on continual confession , and on forgiveness as a 'daily ongoing fact of Christian life'. The circumstance of 'original sin' is , for him ,

sufficient indication that no Christian can ever enter into a state whereby there is no further need for confession. "Although there may be no actual sins (as they are termed), which is very rarely the case, yet there will always be original sin. And as we are always in sin, therefore we ought always to be in prayer; thus, in truth, the hearts of Christians are in prayer every moment, for they see every moment their unworthiness, and desire God to pardon it". (Sel. Works. Vol.1. p. 76.)

This is not the place for an exposition of Luther's doctrine of 'original sin'. This generalisation alone may be ventured: that Luther's view of original sin is akin, for example, to that of Scotus, ~~and~~ who regards it simply as, in essence, self-seeking, self-love. Luther approached 'original sin' from the practical, religious side, rather than from the side of 'pure theology'. He was more concerned with its reality than its origin. Man's 'self-seeking self-love' was no fiction, not even after 'justification'. Hence he must rely on a continual bestowal of forgiveness. Such emphasis upon the necessity for daily confession is one of the healthy, not morbid, features of Luther's religion. "In that thou dost feel and acknowledge thy sin, it is a good token. . . It is one step of health when the sick man doth acknowledge and confess his infirmity". (Comm. on Gal. p. 199.)

In the light of the above, we are hardly surprised to learn that Luther, in his work on Auricular Confession, protests vigorously against the ecclesiastical canon which prescribes confession at least once a year. Even the phrase 'at least' does not soften his antagonism to the essential principle involved. "This observance does not make for real reformation of life, but only fosters formalism and formality. The people should be drawn to confession and communion by the preaching of the Gospel of faith and repentance, and not driven by ecclesiastical enactment". (J. Mackinnon. op.cit. Vol.3. p. 15.)

While Luther, for practical religious reasons, would encourage the reviving of the practice of confession on the part of one Christian to another; while he would encourage the practice of public confession as a complement to private, he still maintains steadfastly that, apart from these practices, there is full absolution in the Gospel. It is perfectly true that "The confession of thy sins may really and truly be compared with the same confession of the saints"; and that "the truth in all, the confession of all, the suffering of all, are the same." (Sel. Works. Vol.2. p. 145.) ; but only because the promise of the Gospel stands behind every Christian experience of forgiveness. "It is only in virtue of the confidence of his faith in the word of promise that the sinner obtains peace and remission with God". (Werke. i.542. quoted J. Mackinnon: op.cit. Vol.2. p.58.)

Certainly Luther does state specifically that such 'remission' is "nowhere to be found but among the company of saints". (Sel. Works. Vol.2. p. 372.) But this must not be taken to mean what contemporary Romanism took it to mean. In Luther's eyes it meant something quite other than that the prayer of confession has to be made to the official hierarchy, and an 'absolution' pronounced by those specially empowered among men to

do so. Here at least is a sphere where his doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers' is applicable. "Whosoever voluntarily confesses his sins privately in the presence of any brother. . . is absolved from his secret sins , since Christ has manifestly bestowed the power of absolution on every believer in Him . . ." (Babl. Capt. p. 211.)

This , of course , must not be taken to imply that Luther put most of his stress upon private confession , and very little upon public. His is the accepted position of almost every branch of the Church , namely , that confession is of two kinds , 'general' and 'particular'. The 'locus classicus' where this complementary view of confession is to be found is in Luther's commentary on Psalm 51 , verse 14 ('deliver me from blood-guiltiness . . .') : "As David before prayed for and obtained the remission of all his sins before God , so now he prays for the remission of all his sins before the Church , that the Church may know he is pardoned before God , lest the doctrine which he determined to preach should be hindered". (Sel. Works. Vol. 1. p. 171.)

There is , in other words , an 'outward' as well as an 'inward' aspect of forgiveness. Luther in no way merits the criticism which Romanism sometimes levels against him , that his religion was too 'introspective'. Any outward demonstration of the inwardly-secured forgiveness is not to be despised. Indeed , from this point of view , Luther can regard a man's physical presence at Holy Communion as a 'reinforcement' of his prayers of confession. The Sacraments are not only incentives to confession ; they are also visible signs that confession has already been made , and forgiveness secured. Luther plainly says : "So are the Sacraments among us ; which we also use for this end , that the whole Church may know that we acknowledge our sin , and believe that it is all forgiven us for Christ's sake". (ibid. p. 171.)

(e) Luther's Ethical Emphasis.

In Luther's view , no amount of private confession , and no amount of confession 'to the whole Church' , would avail unless the penitent , in his prayer of confession , desired an absolution which was not only an authoritative message of peace , but also a gracious means of deliverance from sin's power. One of the distinctive contributions of Protestantism - and , in particular , of Luther - was the emphasis given to the Word as a holy Word. "... if one does not believe in His Word , one will never have . . . peace , though absolved a thousand times by the Pope himself , and confessing to the whole world". (Werke. i. 541. quoted Mackinnon: op.cit. Vol. 2. p.58.)

Understandably , Luther looked with suspicion and disapproval upon a contemporary Church which tended to be satisfied with its power to bestow forgiveness (as it believed) , and failed to stress the necessity for a 'new moral power'. The Christian community can rightly know that it 'has salvation' ; but no community which concentrates on praying for remission of sins to the exclusion (or even partial neglect) of praying for new moral power , can rightly claim to be Christian.

As has been noted (in Chap. III) , Luther regarded the Holy Spirit as having two functions : that of forgiving sins , and that of sanctifying. But these two 'functions' could not , in Luther's view , be separated. That they were so separated by contemporary Romanism can hardly be doubted. It is precisely this separation which he has in mind when he writes : "I should like to know how many people there are who are fully persuaded that they are in a state of salvation , and are making satisfaction for their sins , when they murmur over the prayers enjoined by the priest with their lips alone , and meanwhile do not even think of any amendment of life". (Babyl. Capt. p. 213.)

Romanism's fundamental error , indeed , was just its pre-occupation with 'sins', instead of 'sin'. Luther's whole approach to Confession is not so much through a consideration of 'the multitude of his own sins' , as through a consideration of Sin. This in itself explains Luther's objection to the formal Confessional , the fundamental abuse of which is its pre-occupation with 'sins', as against 'sin'.

Köstlin points out that , in the Confessional , man's conscience was "tormented with the enumeration of single sins , and burdened with all sorts of penitential formalities". (op.cit. p. 20.) For Luther , on the other hand , repentance is a continuous act ; it is an attitude of mind. Hence , even before his final break with Rome , Luther is concerned to draw an important distinction between the two possible meanings of 'poenitentia'. One writer puts the point succinctly thus : "In Latin the English words 'repentance' and 'penance' are designated by the same term 'poenitentia'. Luther's effort , in the Theses , is to separate the two conceptions. Repentance , in the biblical sense , is the inner dissatisfaction with self , on account of sin , combined with the sincere purpose to conform both the inner and outward life to the divine will. But 'penances' , which Luther is not yet ready entirely to repudiate , refer altogether to certain external pledges of the sincerity of repentance , which , in his opinion , the Church could require, as a matter of discipline and order , but on no other grounds". (H.E. Jacobs. 'Martin Luther'. p. 74.)

Not long after the appearance of his Theses Luther did , of course , reject the idea of 'penances' altogether. But even the above statement focuses the emphasis which we wish to place upon Luther's view of confession. In the prayer of confession there must be not only a cry for pardon , but a desire for holiness ; not only a vision of mercy , but a vision of restoration. The first of the ninety-five Theses declares that , "When ~~the~~ our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said 'repent'x (Poenitentiam agere), He called for the entire life of believers to be one of penitence". As Luther himself freely acknowledges in his Letter to Staupitz , the latter was largely responsible for setting him on the way to this vital discovery of repentance as a state of heart and life , rooted in love to God , rather than as a succession of acts. (c.f. B.L. Woolf. op.cit. p. 56f.)

The absence of this dominantly ethical approach to Confession in Roman Catholicism is repeatedly attacked by Luther - sometimes, perhaps, rather too vehemently. "God does not wish to hear the prayer of the

sinner who is not sensible of his sins, because such an one does not understand what he is praying for, and does not wish to understand. Thus the Monk who lives in his superstitions, repeatedly chants and mutters out 'Have mercy upon me, O God'; but, because he lives in a confidence in his own righteousness, and does not feel the uncleanness of his heart, he only utters syllables without understanding the reality of the matter, or wishing to understand it. Moreover, he adds to this a conduct the contrary of his prayers. He asks for pardon, he asks for mercy; whereas, he is all the while seeking by this means and that to make atonement and satisfaction for sin himself. . . . Thus the enemies of the Gospel repeat numberless words, and at the same time not only do not understand the reality of the matter, but act directly the contrary, while they assume various forms of worship, and while they seek the remission of sins by impious masses, by pilgrimages, and invocation of saints". (Sel. Works. Vol.1. p. 70. - 'Expos. of Ps.51')

What Luther, in fact, is always vitally concerned with, is sin as an active power, a 'corrupted disposition', rather than with sin as an external act violating a particular law. The 'uncleanness of the heart' is, for him, the basic reality. Hence, as compared with contemporary prayers of confession, Luther's prayers very rarely contain a particularisation of single sins. The emphasis is on the fact that . . . "Sünde ist meine Natur". Thus, for Luther, the relation between 'original sin' and actual sin is the same as that between faith and good works: the egocentric will is prior to the evil deed.

Precisely because Luther's interest is so profoundly ethical, he refuses to be satisfied with a 'justification' which does not include 'sanctification'. As has been noted, "For Luther, justification is not the act of one moment in the consciousness of the believer. It is a lifelong process of remission by a gracious God, because the believer is always subject to sin, and therefore in need of being justified as long as he is in this life". (J. Mackinnon. op.cit. Vol.1. p.201.) Luther regards 'justification' as something much more than a purely theological and theoretical conception. It is the context within which 'sanctification' takes place - the basic evidence of this sanctification being the frequency of confession in the prayer-life of the man who is justified.

The paradox which meets us so often in Luther's works is simply explained by this notion of justification including sanctification - the paradox of being 'under grace', and, simultaneously, praying for grace. Although the godly are 'under grace', Luther comments, "this sense of grace is weak because of the flesh"; and therefore, "even though they have remission of sins, yet they continually pray and sigh for the remission of sins". (Sel. Works. Vol.1. p. 128.) This, for Luther, is but another way of stating his conviction (noted above) that no prayer of confession is adequate which does not contain within itself a petition for power to live a better life. Luther gives it as his judgment that "the reason why the godly man who has begun to be godly . . . still prays for grace is this; this taste produces a greater thirst after it. For such minds do not rest in the first fruits of the Spirit, but would willingly have the fullness". (ibid.)

Again : "The godly man , the more he feels his infirmity , the more diligent he is in prayer. For this wisdom is ever accompanied with continual prayer. And , as the sense of sin never ceases , so also sighing and prayer never cease , whereby we cry after the perfection of this wisdom. This prayer is not a vain repetition , but an earnest cry , struggling against that war in the flesh which we feel , and desiring that , as the sense of sin abounds , so the sense of grace and the consolations of the Spirit may abound also". (*ibid.*)

Nothing marks out Luther as a stalwart of prophetic religion more than this intensely real experience of sin and grace ; and nothing divides him more cleanly ~~from~~ both from Rome and from the Mystics than this same experience. For him , as for all genuine prophetic minds , sin lay in a breach of the God-ordained order of moral values , in a 'revolt' against God's most holy will. Luther did not deny that sin included the 'unrestrained indulgence in the natural emotions' (the common mystical attitude to sin) , but the really distinctive nature of sin lies in a blunt negation of ethical values. In a word , the distance between man and God is not metaphysical but moral.

One can hardly doubt that such re-emphasis was sadly needed in Luther's age. Heiler has finely said : "Sin and grace , guilt and justification , condemnation and forgiveness - that is the great problem of biblical religion which permeates the entire Old Testament and New Testament , which is never forgotten in the history of Christianity , but which comes to fresh life in its original strength only in the Reformers". (*op. cit.* p.154f.) Forgiveness through confession is impossible without a solution of the petitioner's ethical problems. One cannot know a 'gracious God' without knowing the reality of conscience. As Dr. John Baillie has plainly said , "Luther teaches that the true knowledge of God is given only in relation to problems of conscience". ('Our Knowledge of God'. p. 190.)

This means , for Luther , that a 'saint' cannot be regarded as one who is 'never moved with anything , never feels any lust'. He is one who knows he is a sinner , realises the necessity for confession , and believes in God's power to forgive. Luther rejects outright the notion that a man may attain to such spiritual-mindedness that the need for Confession disappears. "The faithful do confess their unrighteousness, and pray that the wickedness of their sin may be forgiven. Therefore shall every one that is godly make his prayer unto Thee". (Comm. on Gal. p. 487.) Whatever help Luther derived from his early contacts with Mysticism (e.g. the notion of 'self-will') , it was inevitable that he should finally reject it as a fully satisfactory religion ; for , as Heiler justly comments , "Petition for the forgiveness of sin occupies a central position in prophetic prayer , while in mysticism it belongs to the periphery of life". (*op. cit.* p. 243.)

(f) Conclusion.

That Luther repudiated once and for all the complex 'mechanism of absolution' to be found within the Roman Church , will

have become clear from the foregoing discussion. Forgiveness was not a 'substance' to be won or wrested from a reluctant God, by works or meritorious prayer, but found through the simple, spontaneous prayer of confession, resting on a genuine humility. Heiler, who claims that the Prodigal in the Parable wins forgiveness and restoration to the Father's house by the simple prayer of confession, goes on to comment: "Luther revived this biblical idea of salvation, to which Augustine could never quite advance". ('Prayer'. p. 157.) We can add: '... and neither did the Romanism of Luther's day'.

Luther was deeply perturbed to notice in contemporary religion at least the tendency to believe that the confession of sinfulness or the admission of guilt had as its object the appeasing of God's wrath and the awakening of His pity through self-absement. For him, anything short of an 'unreserved confession of one's own unworthiness' was wrongly motivated prayer, and therefore prayer without any profound effect for good (c.f. *ibid.* p. 259.) This is equally true of private and public confession. There can be no substitute for a heartfelt acknowledgement of sin. 'Attrition' cannot replace 'contrition'. It is a significant fact that the doctrine of attrition does not occur in Luther's writings before 1517; and an even more significant fact that, after that date, it is named only to be criticised.

So anxious is Luther to eliminate all thought of 'merit' from the Christian life that he insists time and again that the justified person is equally dependent upon the forgiveness of sins at the end of his life, as at the moment of conversion. "There never comes a time", one writer declares - speaking of Luther's attitude - "when he can point to something in his life that does not need forgiveness. For Luther, man is justified only as he continually acknowledges his need of forgiveness, and continually accepts God's free pardon. Outside of that forgiveness, he always remains a sinner". (E.M. Carlsen: *op.cit.* p. 52f.)

Anything less than a continual, daily acknowledgement of his need of forgiveness meant, in Luther's view, that a man was refusing to give due 'glory' to God. In fact, the prayer of confession has this much in common with every other type of prayer, namely, that it falls under that 'homage to Almighty God' which Luther regarded as the fundamental idea of all prayer. When he confesses "Ich bin ein armer Sünder", Luther is not merely stating a fact; he is expressing the heartfelt conviction that God is supremely holy.

Hence, the purpose of the prayer of confession is not to make God acquainted with our sin (or sins), but that, facing the truth about God and about ourselves, we may be put into the right attitude towards God whereby we may be fitted to receive His pardon. In confession we give God His due honour. In the previous section the statement was made that, in the prayer of confession, there must be not only a cry for pardon but a desire for holiness. We can now add: '... and a desire to honour the Holy One Himself. Again, there must be not only a vision of mercy, but a vision of restoration: to which we can add, '... and a vision of the Restorer Himself. It can hardly be doubted that Romanism perceived far less deeply than Luther the truth that, in the prayer of con-

fession , not only is sin confessed , but God is honoured. It is precisely by our confession , not by our desire to 'be good' before approaching God , that we give glory to Him. "God does not dispute with us about righteousness , but requires this , that we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners". (Sel.Works. Vol.1. p. 124.) And when this confession has been made , then , without any need of the 'mechanism of absolution' , "Salvation descends from God through Christ unto sin ; and we ascend from sin through Christ unto God". (Sel. Works. Vol.3. p.238.- Comm. on 1st 22 Psalms.)

Chapter VIII. PETITION.

(a) Introduction.

It has been finely pointed out that , "Among the prayers of Luther we find a surprisingly small number of such as give praise and thanks. The contrast with mystical prayer could not be clearer. In Mysticism , contemplative adoration forms the climax of all prayer and meditation ; in prophetic religion , praise and thanksgiving are secondary to petition and intercession". (F.Heiler. 'Prayer'. p. 230.)

Luther's religion , as we have noted , was strongly prophetic in flavour ; and nowhere has this prophetic note been sounded so clearly as in the central position which he gave to the petition for forgiveness of sin (vide ch. VII.). The prayer of Confession , in his view , was man's devotional life-blood. Luther has been shown to have regarded it as theologically sound to approach Prayer through the act of Adoration and Thanksgiving (ch. VI.) - the 'first sacrifice' - and further , to have regarded the prayer of Thanksgiving on account of experienced redemption as the best introduction to , and preparation for , the Petition for redemption. We can now note that Luther regarded this petition for forgiveness as the best theological preparation for more general petitions.

His view-point has been echoed by Heiler in these words : "The acknowledgement of sin , with the prayer for forgiveness following on it, leads up to petition proper". (ibid. p. 324.) Our present concern , therefore , will not be with the 'special petition' par excellence (i.e. for forgiveness) which has been discussed in chapter VII , but with petition in its broader aspect : petition as the expression of each and every need of the human soul and body.

(b) The Motive of Necessity.

Luther's theological position with regard to petition is governed by his characteristically religious viewpoint - that the consciousness of need is our chief spiritual asset. Petitionary prayer was regarded by him as man's most rudimentary and essential life-attitude , and one which presupposed all genuine religion. Indeed, it might even be claimed for Luther that , in spite of his constant emphasis upon the 'Word' as that which was constitutive of prayer , he regarded prayer to have , "even without Scripture warrant . . . , a basis in our dependent and helpless condition in the world". (Richard & Painter. op. cit. p. 24.)

This element of 'dependence' and 'helplessness' is strikingly evident in Luther's writings. "Man tells what he desires" , Luther remarks ; "he desires to get out of his misery , to be free of the evil thing ; he begs for aid ; he is not abashed before the exalted Majesty , but speaks outright , 'help me , dear God , O that I had this or that'". (Erl. 35. 356.) Prayer is regarded by Luther as the coming of a beggar to God Whose delight is to give - a beggar who 'opens wide his cloak in order to receive much'. (Weim. 30 I , 197.) In a word : one of the observable facts of the religious life of prophetic personalities is that its sum and substance comprises simply the consciousness of complete dependence upon a higher will. This is supremely true of Luther.

He is commenting upon his own experience, when he writes : "There is no better schoolmaster to teach us to pray than necessity. Whiles we walk in security and are not touched with any feeling of present danger, no marvel it is if our prayer be either no prayer at all, or else very faint and cold". (Comm. on Ps. of D. p. 8.) In fact, Luther's theological insight into the 'Word of Promise' as the primary motive for all prayer in no way hinders his frank recognition of 'necessity' as the secondary motive. These motives are really complementary, as Luther is careful to show. He points out not only that God invites him "to call upon Me in time of trouble" (the 'Word of Promise'), but also that "without trouble it is only a bald prattling, and not from the heart; 'tis a common saying - 'need teaches us to pray' (the 'Motive of Necessity')". (ibid.)

Luther believed that, as a general rule, man prays more readily and more intensely in adversity than in prosperity. This belief is supported, as we have noted, in the observable fact that his own prayers of thanksgiving are surprisingly few in number compared with his prayers of petition; and the foregoing statements are further confirmation. In one of his frequent, forthright utterances, he says: "Except under troubles, trials, and vexations, prayer cannot rightly be made". (Table Talk. CCCXXIX.)

Such statements, however, must not be construed as a denial of the fact that "to pray is not only or primarily a means of supplying human necessity; it is an act of loving and dutiful homage done to the majesty of God". (Worrlidge. 'Prayer'. p. 4.) It will be shown that Luther's prayers of petition 'give glory to God' in precisely the same measure as any other of his prayers; nevertheless, Luther did regard prayer as partly a 'means of supplying human necessity'. He is not of the company who regard the prayer of thanksgiving as much superior to the prayer of petition. We have seen that the two-fold division of prayer which pervades his writings is that of Petition and Thanksgiving. Both are legitimate parts of prayer. He speaks of that which "stirs us up . . . to prayer, that we should call upon Him for aid and succour (petition); and, being delivered, should give thanks and praise for the same (thanksgiving)". (Comm. on Ps. of D. p. 87) But he leaves us in no doubt as to which 'motive' for prayer he considers the more powerful. "No one prays for anything deeply who has not been deeply alarmed ('erschrocken')". (Table Talk. Erl. 59. 3.)

(c) Petition and a Personal God.

In face of this emphasis upon the 'motive of necessity', a superficial reader of Luther's works might feel that there was some inconsistency in his theology, and that his claim to 'theocentricity' broke down precisely here. Can the undoubted prominence of petitionary prayer be reconciled to Luther's attitude to prayer generally as being an expression of homage to God?

Luther himself finds no difficulty in effecting this 'reconciliation'. The prominence of petition in his 'scheme of prayer', far from being a contradiction of his attitude to faith and to God, is actually a

logical fulfilment of it. Certainly prayer is not merely asking, but Luther was convinced that man could not know how to pray until he had learned how to ask. Failure to ask is, ultimately, the result of failure to understand the divine nature. "Like as we slenderly believe, so we slenderly ask". (Comm. on Ps. of D. p.252.)

Hence, Luther is forthright in denying that petition is the sign of immature Christianity; rather is it the evidence of a fully personal conception of God. "It is of considerable importance", one writer declares, "that Luther's theocentric interest does not lead him to exclude petitionary prayer. . . . He does not share the view frequently expressed that such prayer has necessarily a selfish taint, and is therefore inferior, from a Christian point of view, to praise and adoration. On the contrary, he sets a very high value on petition, precisely as a means of guarding against selfishness, and ensuring theocentricity in prayer. If we omit the request for daily bread, or for any other of our necessities, from our prayers, does not this imply that we suppose ourselves capable of managing our own affairs and supplying our own needs without God? The simple fact is that without God we can do nothing; we are utterly dependent on Him for all that we have and are; and it is precisely by petitionary prayer that we can make clearest and fullest acknowledgment of this fact. Rightly understood, petition gives expression to the true relationship between man and God". (P. Watson. op.cit. p.40.)

Prayer - and not least petition - is rooted in the religious awareness of God as personal. It is, moreover, rooted in an awareness not just that God is 'personal', but that this Person is the One upon whom we are absolutely (and not relatively) dependent; not just in the experience of need met, but of need met on this intensely personal level. Petition, of a kind, may well be perfectly compatible with 'very shadowy perceptions of God', being the 'cry of a child towards its parent'; but petition in Luther is far removed from such a primitive flavour (c.f. 'Christian Doc. of P.' p. 13.) With him, petition arises not in spite of a lack of knowledge of God's nature, but directly as a result of such knowledge. In a word: Luther demands that prayer - like all worship - must be 'theological'.

No religious conception meant more to Luther than that of the 'Fatherhood of God'; and no more obvious corollary to it could be found than that of the centrality of petition. One of the most distinctive notes which Luther sounded was just the truth that God wants to be sought as a fatherly Helper; and that everything which moves in men's souls, great or small, can be taken up into petition to God. A theology of prayer must be grounded on this fact. God is not primarily a severe Judge - as contemporary religion often regarded Him - reluctant to hear men's prayers. Meaningful petition must be impossible without the fervent conviction that God is a willing 'Hearer of Prayer', since the religious relationship, within which all true prayer is made, does not properly exist. As a modern theologian has indicated, "It is precisely in petition that the duality between the 'I' and the 'Thou', without which there can be no personal relationship, is preserved". (H.H. Farmer. 'The World and God'. p.136.)

The practical importance of Luther's insistence on the religious relationship is far-reaching. It saves him, for example, from the error of regarding petition as solely a means of winning a favour - though one is compelled to admit that there are statements in Luther which suggest the opposite (c.f. Erl. 64. 289f; Erl. 59.9. 25 - 'annoyance' at a prayer for rain being unanswered; Weimar 43. 81). No doubt Luther's 'extravagant' language will remain a stumbling block as long as his works are read; yet any suggestion of 'primitivism' in his attitude to prayer can be explained (partially, at least) by the fact that it is essentially the result, not the contradiction, of the reality of the Father-child relationship. The fact remains that, without prior belief in God as a personal Deity, and as a willing 'Auditor precum', none of his fervent or 'primitive' utterances in prayer would be possible.

Belief in man's ability to 'win God over to his side', for example, is ultimately little else than a crude form of vital, personal intercourse with God. Indeed, it does not belong to the essence of prayer at all. The real 'miracle of prayer', according to Luther, was not any influence man might bring to bear upon God, but lay in the mysterious, yet intensely personal contact, which took place between the Creator and the created. Behind every subjective dynamic experience lies the objective reality of a personal God. "If I did not know that our prayer would be heard", Luther says simply, "the devil may pray in my stead". (Erl. 59, 23.) No amount of personal necessity could constrain a man to petition God for anything, unless he realised, however dimly, that he was, in so doing, paying homage to a God who was in the position of being able to grant his requests. The theological principle of 'Gloria Dei', in fact, is illustrated as firmly in Petition as in Thanksgiving, or Confession.

One is therefore not surprised to find that, while Luther insists on the importance of a 'Motive of Necessity', he makes it clear that the 'glory of God' is as great a 'necessity' as "our troubles and afflictions". (Comm. on Ps. of D. p.9.) But this larger necessity is perceived only by the man who has faith in a personal God, and in the Word of Promise which stands behind all prayer. Hence, Luther's own 'apologia' for his seemingly unjustifiable stress on the 'motive of necessity' must be summed up in his frank reminder that "the best thing of all in prayer is faith", together with his own personal admission that, all things considered, "the real and actual cause, the 'efficient causa' of prayer, is faith". (Erl. 8.36; 50. 110.)

(d) Petition and 'Subjective Benefits'.

Only in the light of this 'efficient causa' of prayer - faith in a personal God who desires to be related personally to His creatures - can we understand Luther's rejection of the common idea that the benefits of prayer are solely subjective. He did not deny that these benefits were real; but he did deny that they were even possible without a firm objective basis. Luther found it impossible to imagine that anyone can be beneficially affected by the practice of that

which he believes to have no results external to himself. On a purely practical level, Luther insisted that prayer could not continue if it be regarded simply as a form of 'self-stimulus' or 'auto-suggestion'. We have already noted the importance which he gives to such a text as "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him". (Heb. xi.6.)

To Luther, prayer was an indication of the character of the theological idea which it expresses. In the act of prayer man's idea of God is invariably expressed - either consciously or unconsciously. This is one of the reasons for Luther's insistence on 'right doctrine' as well as on the necessity for removing abuses of practice. His view has been echoed in such words as these: "Prayer necessitates a belief in the real and objective existence of the object of worship. Apart from the value-judgment presupposed in an attitude of prayer, that religious exercise would be an impossibility. For prayer involves a reference to the transcendent, a many-sided conviction of the real significance and value of the super-sensible: many-sided because the prayerful consciousness must accept more than the mere existence of its God. . . that primary assurance is attended by the conviction of His accessibility and approachableness". (A.Hodge: 'Prayer & Its Psychology'. p.73.) More simply, Luther himself says: "Unless he (the spiritual man) did believe in God, and fear God, he could not hope to attain anything of Him by prayer". (Comm. on Gal. p.181.)

The subjective effect of prayer, then, must depend upon our belief in the reality of its power as an act of real communion with a living, personal God. Every 'subjective need' points to an 'objective stimulus' which has provoked the need. So that, although from the moral point of view the value of Christian prayer is not so much the getting as the asking, unless the asking be done with the real conviction that it can avail with God, its beneficial effect upon the petitioner must be very small indeed. Prayer, to Luther, was not merely psychological; it was 'transcendental'. His belief in the 'power of prayer' is, in the final analysis, not a sign of 'primitivism', but an essential expression of the intensely personal nature of the relationship previously established between God and himself. "In prayer", he insists, "we must ask nothing but that we are certainly persuaded we may, or ought, to pray for". (Comm. on Ps. of D. p. 293.)

(e) The Religious 'Discipline' of Petition.

There is a further reason for the prominence of petition in Luther. Not only is petition objectively grounded in the divine Word of Promise, and a means of 'supplying human necessity'; it is also a means of testing a man's inward loyalty to God. This practical, religious aspect is of considerable importance in Luther's whole attitude.

'Importunity in prayer', for example, which a certain type of piety (such as Mysticism) would frown upon, is regarded by Luther as a mark of the masculine, prophetic type of religion which he so persistently endeavoured to stress. 'Importunity' makes no essential change in God; but 'induces' in man such dispositions as God thinks fit to reward. It is

precisely in this way that continuance in prayer becomes a test of character. This 'subjective benefit' is, however, only incidental, and in no way the principal reason for petition. Yet, Luther found it easy to believe that to give up a request might well betray a theologically inadequate conception of God, as well as a poverty of personal faith. In his Commentary on the 1st 22 Psalms he gives it as his conclusion that "God seems sometimes to deny for a time; but if the soul did not feel a confidence that it should be heard, it would not pray". (Sel. Works. Vol. 4. p. 36f.)

He freely regarded petition as one means - indeed, the chief means - of eliciting and training man's conscious dependence upon God, the acknowledgement of which is rightly the condition upon which any particular blessing is received. Or, to put it another way, man's "giving glory to God" is the prerequisite of God's giving blessing to man. And man gives this 'glory' simply by asking. In his Greater Catechism Luther declares: "Because He is God, He takes upon Himself the honour of giving far more and more abundantly than anyone can understand; . . . and He desires nothing more of us than that we should ask many and great things of Him, and is vexed if we do not ask, and demand with confidence". (Prim. Works. W & B. 117.)

The importance which Luther assigns to the principle of importunity is clearly illustrated in the 'Table Talk'. Commenting upon Christ's words "Ask and ye shall have; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you", he explains that "first . . . when we are in trouble, He will have us to pray; for God often, as it were, hides Himself, and will not hear; yea, He will not suffer Himself to be found. Then we must seek Him, that is, we must continue in prayer. When we seek Him He often locks Himself up, as it were, in a private chamber; if we intend to come in unto Him, then we must knock, and when we have knocked once or twice, then He begins a little to hear. At last, when we make much knocking, then He opens and says 'What will ye have?' 'Lord', say we, 'we would have this or that'; 'then', says He, 'take it unto you'. In such sort must we persist in praying, and waken God up". (CCCCXXIX)

These quaint, not to say 'primitive-sounding' phrases, emphasise one basic religious fact: that God can do for the ardent what He cannot possibly do for the apathetic. Nothing can be given by God unless it is morally and consentingly received by man. These, and similar, phrases certainly do not imperil the exalted character of the filial relationship evident in the New Testament, and which Luther has tirelessly claimed to be the 'sine qua non' of prayer. When, for instance, he advises us to "deafen Him with incessant solicitation" ('mit stetem Anhalten') he is suggesting not that we can change God's will, but that "vehement and urgent petition rather brings out that will's inherent nature and original intent. God . . . wishes and waits to yield to the pressure of ardent love. His will for man is that he should so wrestle with his Maker, as to snatch out of His grasp, as it were, in the exercise of prayer, those very blessings which He is most eager to bestow. God in all this conquers by being overborne". (R.H.Coates: op.cit. p. 64.) Indeed, God's will for man includes his importunity. "With our prayer", Luther writes, "let us burst through the clouds which hide from us the presence

of our most gracious God , and think that prayer is an acceptable sacrifice to God , and such a service as He Himself requireth of us". (Comm. on Ps. of D. p. 9.)

This latter statement in itself is sufficient to dispel the idea that Luther regarded petition as little more than an instrument of magic in the hands of men. He regarded it rather as a channel of human discipline (from a secondary viewpoint only) - a channel through which man might show himself ready to understand and cooperate with the divine will. God , Luther believed , actually desired men to pray against what seemed His will because , for the lower stage of their growth (i.e. in the absence of such prayer) , that might well be His will for them. This aspect of Luther's theology of prayer is one of the most striking evidences which can be noted of Luther's distinctive outlook , as compared with that of other theologians who have in other respects followed the main line of his theological argument. Ritschl , for example , who owes so much to Luther , cannot accept this aspect of his view of petition. As has been said; "The last chapter of Ritschl's 'Justification and Reconciliation' affords an example of the way in which a mind , otherwise showing a profound grasp of the Christian experience and message , when it comes to the question of petitionary prayer , suddenly reveals itself to be dominated by ideas of providence and of the reign of law. . . In the later sections , prayer is reduced almost completely to a thankful submission to the divine will". (H.H. Farmer. op.cit. p.5.)

But it is worth repeating that Luther refutes the idea that we 'move' God by our requests. As he recognises in his Shorter Catechism , "God gives bread to all men , even the wicked , without our prayer ; but we pray in this prayer ('give us this day' etc.) that we may recognise this goodness of God , and with gratitude receive our daily bread". The practical religious purpose of petition is the creation in man of such dispositions as God can reward by a fresh revelation of Himself. The presence of a particular petition is the evidence or token of the fact that the gift will be properly valued and rightly used in accordance with the intention of the Donor.

(f) The Scope of Petition.

It will have become clear that , for Luther , there was no enterprise or relationship of life in which man was not completely dependant on divine guidance and blessing. Petition , therefore , is regarded by him as being quite unrestricted with regard to subject. "We ought to bring before God all sorts of necessities". (Weim. 43. 381.) His viewpoint was simply that , to pray about everything within the context of a deep confidence in a 'gracious God' , is much more human and much more Christian than scrupulously to limit one's petitions to what might be thought by the petitioner to be permissible subjects of petition. "The natural and reverent way of approaching God is not to settle beforehand the limit of His power , nor to conclude that He can grant only this and that request , but to take Christ at His Word , to tell God everything , to come as a little child to a father". ('Chris. Doc. of P.' p.93.)

The frequency with which Luther addresses God as 'Father' is

one of the evidences of his agreement with this viewpoint. The more real was the filial relationship, the more individual and the more inclusive would be the petitions offered. He strongly resisted the tendency of Mysticism which openly abandoned the practice of 'particularising' petitions, on the ground that they were evidences of a 'lower type of piety'. Prayer can only too easily die (as it did in Mysticism) for very vagueness. Luther did not deny that the 'generalities' of formal worship had their place; but if the spirit of New Testament religion was to be preserved, it would have to be done parallel with an emphasis upon the complementary experience of spontaneous, personal, and particular prayer.

While Luther places little restriction on the subjects of petitions, there are however some statements in his works which might seem to suggest otherwise - or at least to suggest a distinction between certain groups of subjects. No doubt Heiler is right in claiming that Luther "emphasises the biblical thought of man's right to pray for what is earthly and temporal" (op.cit. p. 251); and no doubt it is true that Luther found little idea of a cleavage between 'spiritual' and 'temporal' petitions in the New Testament - but he did find the latter continually thought of with reference to higher spiritual ends. Hence, in Luther, we find a distinction drawn, not so much between prayer for spiritual and prayer for temporal blessings, as between the theocentric and egocentric attitude which man can adopt to both. In a word: prayer for temporal blessing must never be prayer for temporal blessing only; but that such blessing, if granted, may serve the larger purpose of divine Providence.

In his comments on the Lord's Prayer, Luther indicates his conviction that it is arbitrary to confine petitionary prayer to 'religious' objects - or even to 'ethical' ones - and he points out that the prayer for 'daily bread' is clearly opposed to this 'super-spirituality'. Nevertheless, he frankly recognises that the petition for material things might well be denied because its granting might be a hindrance to spiritual things. He himself often acknowledged in his prayers, for instance, that God could not be expected to give physical deliverance when there was a higher interest at stake. This is what he means most often by the phrase 'Thy will be done' (e.g. in his prayer for the recovery of his daughter). God may regard favourably the person of man, while still refusing to grant a particular petition.

Hence, we find in Luther a simple exposition of the principle of 'conditional prayer'. Temporal things may be prayed for only 'conditionally'. "We should place our will under that of God in everything which concerns the body. Inasmuch as only God knows what is good for us, and can be of use to us, we should put His will before ours, and show obedience with patience". (Erl. 2. 30f.) Again, while we "ought to bring before God all sorts of necessities", Luther clearly says "first, spiritual needs . . . ; after that, common temporal needs of this life on earth". (Weim. 43. 381.)

But the most conclusive statement of all is that the things pertaining to the "glory of God and our salvation" can be prayed for "without condition"; but the things pertaining to "this life" (while still hoping the petitions will be granted) must be prayed for "with condition", "re-

signing our wills to the Lord's will , to do therein as seemeth good unto Him , and profitable for us". (Comm. on Ps. of D. p.12.) This statement, of course , is the necessary corollary of the distinction already observed in the chapter on 'Some Theological Pre-suppositions' - the distinction between the 'spiritual' and 'corporeal' promises. Man can rightly pray 'absolutely' (ie. without condition) for those things promised absolutely in God's Word ; 'conditionally' for those things promised conditionally ; and pray not at all for those things not promised. Petition - like all other types of prayer - was regarded by Luther as a form of intelligent correspondence with the revealed will of God.

(g) Conclusion.

The foregoing exposition and assessment of Luther's theology of petition is not intended to gloss over the undoubted fact that his practice of prayer does not always correspond with his theory. In any case , such occasional discrepancies as occur are inadequate evidence for depreciating him ; rather are they - if the thesis of this whole study is sound (i.e. the primacy of the religious relationship) - an eloquent witness to the intense personalism of his attitude to prayer ; a personalism which has certainly never been surpassed in the subsequent history of prayer.

Luther's practice did not quite correspond with his theory (at times) because his greatness as a man of devotion exceeds his greatness as a 'systematic theologian'. And it is principally if not exclusively here , in the prayer of petition , that the non-correspondence (and therefore his greatness) is most finely focussed. Luther's devotion was much more real than anything he said about devotion. His profound belief in a personal God , coupled with the astonishing fervour of his own heart , made it almost inevitable that he should be the first to break the 'rule of prayer' which he was unwise enough to formulate. As has been well said concerning this 'rule' : "Luther encourages on the one side to importunate prayer ; on the other , that prayer for earthly things shall be restricted. These are two phases of one and the same exercise of prayer , and any attempted rule of prayer will exalt the one at the expense of the other". (Heller. 'Prayer'. p.270.)

However, this admitted paradox in Luther's theory and practice of petition in no way minimises the service which he rendered both to contemporary and subsequent religion. 'Importunity' in petition only emphasises what is essential for all forms of prayer , namely , an intensely personal relationship between God and man (such as did not obtain generally in 'orthodox' Catholicism) ; and the principle of 'conditional petition' only emphasises the basic motive of all true prayer , namely , 'giving glory to God' (which was certainly not the basic motive of 'orthodox' Catholicism).

Luther regarded petition as being intimately linked up with man's status as a personal being - a being called to relate all his desires and purposes to God. None knew better than he that God's purpose is already directed to man's good , apart from the petition ; but none emphasised more strongly than he did the view that God's purpose is such , that

petition may well be indispensable to its realisation. This view was shared neither by mysticism nor by the thoroughly Pelagian religion of Rome - and it was Luther's apprehension of a personal God which saved him from the two opposite errors of contemporary religion, as embodied in these two 'devotional systems'. It saved him from the error of a prayer which expressed the "refined eudaemonism which makes Him merely the source of a beatific state of mind", and from the one which expressed the "primitive eudaemonism which makes God the ally of our unregenerate desires". (H.H. Farmer: op.cit. p. 26.)

In fact, the Mystical and popular Romanist attitude to petition are both emphatically rejected by Luther because neither shows an appropriate consciousness of complete dependence upon a higher will - a dependence which, to him, was the sum and substance of a healthy religious life. The divine-human relationship is that of a Giver to a receiver; and the prayer of petition is precisely the one which most effectively expresses that relationship. As has been noted: "We cannot give the Lord the glory due unto His name unless we gladly and gratefully accept the gifts He has given, and humbly ask Him to give more and yet more. It is just in thankful petition that we most truly acknowledge God to be God". (P. Watson: op.cit. p. 41.)

This is not; however, to suggest that what is ultimately the precious thing in the sight of God is the particularising of the request; but rather the filial attitude in which all requests are made. Only this prior reality of the filial attitude can explain, for instance, why "our petitions always fall short of the gifts we receive from God". (Sol. Works. Vol.4. p. 341.) The infallible sign of an imperfect divine-human relationship is, by contrast, that 'the gifts fall short of the petitions'.

Yet it remains true that the more real the filial relationship, the more individual and particular will be the petitions offered. Luther emphatically repudiated the pseudo-pious view of prayer which claims that, because we know God is gracious, there is no need to petition Him, since God cannot but deal graciously with men. He freely recognised that God always gave "that which is profitable for us. For God, in that He is good, can give nothing but that which is good". (Comm. on Ps. of D. p. 12.); but this conviction, far from being a support for rejecting petition, was actually the ground of it. As a prophet, Luther believed not only that prayer is the inevitable response of man to the Ultimate as Personal, but also that prayer in its most spontaneous and fervent utterance - both in its 'primitive' and in its more developed forms - must take the form of petition.

In fact, Luther not only regarded prayer as the central phenomenon of religion; but he also regarded petition as the central phenomenon of prayer.

Chapter IX. INTERCESSION.

In the preceding chapter the truth that , in prophetic religion, "praise and thanksgiving are secondary to petition and intercession" has been amply substantiated as far as petition is concerned. To show that this statement is equally true with regard to intercession will be the burden of the first part of the present chapter.

Luther's theology of intercession can be examined , for convenience , under two distinct headings , viz. (1) Prayer for the Living ; and (2) Prayer for the Dead. Only the first of these will be in any way relevant to the task of substantiating the above statement ; the second will be considered for the sake of completeness.

(1) Prayer for the Living.

(a) Introduction.

Heller has rightly stated that "Paul put intercessory prayer at the very centre of the devotional life of the Christian". ('Prayer'. p. 124.) It may equally truly stated that Luther , more than most great devotional figures , was concerned to keep it there. (NOTE: in the present section 'Intercession' will be taken to mean 'Prayer for the Living' , unless specifically defined otherwise).

As we have already discovered , Luther found no lack of petition in contemporary Romanism (though much of it was fear-motivated , and directed towards obtaining the benefit rather than towards worshipping the Giver) ; but he found a dearth of truly-motivated intercession. No clearer contrast between the prophetic religion of Luther and the non-social religion of contemporary Romanism can be found than in the fact of the former's insistence that "the concern is not so much the salvation of the individual , but of the whole people , the Church". (ibid. p.296) The 'scramble for salvation' which Luther saw and deplored in Romanism was sufficient indication that the Church had forgotten its ministry of intercession. He on the contrary emphasised 'social solidarity' in prayer (as was noted in chapter V) , and , in particular , the prayer of intercession which arises naturally from it.

There is an implied criticism of current devotional practice in Luther's declaration that congregational prayers must be "done with heartfelt emotion and sincerity , so that we feel in our hearts the needs of all men , and that we pray with true sympathy for them , in true faith and confidence". ('Works'. Vol.1. p. 233. - 'Treatise on Good Works') Indeed , so strongly does he feel about the indispensability of intercession in ordinary worship that he refuses to recognise the right of any congregation to meet at all , unless intercession is a part of their worship. (ibid.)

The primacy of intercession in private devotion is none the less recognised by Luther. "What are the things" , he asks , "which we must bring before Almighty God in prayer ? Answer : first , every man's own besetting need and trouble ". (ibid.) The place of the 'Motive of

Necessity' in petition has already been shown (chap. 8.) ; it can now be stated that the motive of other's necessity constitutes as powerful a motive for prayer as that of one's own necessity , as far as Luther is concerned. To say the least , this distinctive feature of prophetic religion can hardly be claimed to have occupied a prominent place in contemporary Catholicism.

"The emotional intensity of sympathy" , Heiler declares in what might be regarded as an exact exposition of Luther's attitude to intercession , "the feeling of oneself in another's distress . . . urges to prayer , as does the sense of one's own need. The threatened good represented in another human personality is felt as if embodied in one's own ego. With pity comes the effort to help. But the work of succour is not enough ; the consciousness of the entire dependence of all that happens upon God , and the expectation of His aid , thus lead to intercession". (op.cit. p.232f.) "No one is so heavily burdened with his labour" , Luther himself says , "but that . . . he can . . . speak with God in his heart , lay before Him his need , and that of other men . . ." (Works. Vol.1. 'Treat. on G. Wks.')

(b) Intercession and the 'Body of Christ'.

This capacity of 'laying before Him the needs of other men' is regarded by Luther as one which takes its rise from the experience of redemption. The prayer of intercession , more than any other form of prayer (even including Confession) , is motivated by the personal apprehension of the fact that Christ died 'that the world through Him might be saved'. Except within the context of regeneration , intercession is 'unnatural'. "As Martin Luther put it" , wrote the late Dr. D.M. Baillie , "the 'natural man' is 'incurvatus in se' , bent inwards upon himself , instead of looking away from himself towards God and his fellows in love". ('God was in Christ'. p.204.)

Intercession , even more than petition , is possible only to a believer in Christ , a member of His Body. Luther categorically states that "Unto the unbeliever nothing serveth or worketh unto good . . . ; he doth wickedly employ all his endeavour for his own behoof , and not to the glory of God. And by this means he is not a priest but profane , whose prayer turneth unto sin ; and he does not appear before God , because God doth not hear (unrepentant) sinners". (Lib. of a Christian Man. p. 32.)

Prayer , in fact , is not (as is commonly supposed) exclusively a matter between God and the individual soul. The 'New Israel in Christ' had a 'corporate personality' ; prayer 'in Christ' involves prayer 'in and with His Body'. Hence , we find Luther's strong emphasis upon a further aspect of New Testament religion - the fact of men's common membership in the Body of Christ.

This is the origin of his doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers'. The privilege of intercession rests upon belief in Christ , not upon the 'sacrament' of Ordination. "we be priests also for ever . . . , for through our priesthood we are made worthy to appear before God , to plead and pray for other men , and one to instruct the other the things

that are of God. For these be offices peculiar unto priests, which can in no wise be committed to any unbeliever. Such a prerogative hath Christ obtained for us, that as joint-brethren, co-heirs, and joint-kings, so also we should be unto Him joint-priests, presuming boldly with confidence through the spirit of faith, to preach unto the presence of God, and to cry unto Him 'Abba, Father', and to pray for each other". (ibid. p.31.)

However, in pointing out that intercession is the one 'instrument of devotion' shared in common with all believers, Luther is emphatically not undermining the idea of an ordained ministry. "We be all priests indifferently, yet can we not all, nor yet ought we all minister and teach publicly, though we were all able to do so". (ibid. p. 34.) He insists on a discrimination being made between those who shall preach and teach, and those who shall not; but no Christian is to be prevented from exercising the 'priesthood' which he has by virtue of being a believer - the ministry of intercession. All 'believers in the Word' should pray as part of the Church for themselves, for each other, and with each other. "thou . . must pray as a member of the Church, which with one voice sayeth 'Our Father'". (Comm. on Ps. of D. p. 9.)

Luther's objection to the 'official' priestly prayers had its ground precisely here. They were not genuinely prayers of the 'Body of Christ'. Moreover, Luther objected equally to the principle upon which these prayers rested - the principle of 'vicarious prayer'; though, strictly speaking, it was the abuse rather than the principle itself which he mainly attacked. The immediate effect upon piety, of this principle of vicarious prayer (a principle stoutly defended by the Roman Church), was that men tended to place all the less emphasis upon the necessity of praying as 'members of Christ's Body', in proportion as they placed more upon the efficacy of prayers offered by the hierarchy. Luther, in contrast, proclaimed the inevitability and indispensability of personal, yet Church-centred, intercession. Intercession cannot be 'delegated' to someone else.

The fact that contemporary Romanism did believe in the possibility of delegating intercession to someone else is a clear commentary upon the weakened understanding of the whole sphere of truly personal relationships which had taken place within the official cultus. It had led, inter alia, to the claim that the problem of God's answers to men's petitions and intercessions was largely, or solely, a problem of approaching God through the right channels. Luther, on the other hand, reduced this problem (or rather enlarged it) by making God's answers to petitions and intercessions depend first upon a man's individual relationship to Him, and second upon the character of men's common life together as the Body of Christ.

In a word: God hears intercessions which are based, first, upon a simply faith in Him as 'Hearer of Prayer' (and not as Judge to be 'appeased'); and, second, upon the frank recognition of an already redeemed community (the 'Body of Christ') that there are still others outside that community whose need of redemption is ever-present. Hence, Luther's brief formula for intercession, and for the necessity thereof, is that: "We must renounce all confidence in our natural strength, and

take the matter in hand with humble trust in God ; we must seek God's help with earnest prayer , and have nothing in our eyes but the misery and wretchedness of Christendom". ('Add. to Nobility'. p. 19.) Intercession cannot arise except through the distinctively Christian recognition of the 'misery and wretchedness of Christendom' , just as petition cannot arise except through the recognition of one's own 'misery and wretchedness'. For Luther , only when the true condition of Christians is realised , and one "really takes it to heart" , will one "sympathise with everyone , and pray for all". (Weim. 2. 757.) In brief : the more real is one's sense of membership in the Body of Christ , the more prominent will intercession become in the individual's , and in the Church's , devotional experience.

(c) The Religious 'Discipline' of Intercession.

The presence of a fervent intercession has been shown to signify , in Luther's theology , the apprehension of one's membership in the Body of Christ. But he regards intercession not only as the outward expression of this apprehension ; he regards it also as a means whereby this very apprehension may be secured.

In the last chapter it was shown that Luther regarded petition, from one point of view at least , as a means of testing one's loyalty to God. We can now note that he looked upon intercession as a further , and more rigorous , test. The persistent , heart-searching request in prayer ('importunity') becomes even more significant and vital in intercession than petition , since God's will for others includes our vigorous intercession on their behalf (c.f. 'Chris. Doc. of P.' p. 111 : "If it is the will of God that all men should be saved - and He , through His servant (Paul) exhorts us to intercede for all - it is clear that intercession must be at least one amongst the many means that God employs for the carrying out of His beneficent purposes".)

It cannot be too strongly stated , however , that these 'beneficent purposes' are not carried out , according to Luther , merely because a particular intercession has been offered. There is no 'meritorious power' in intercession. Intercession - like petition - is a God-ordained instrument of achieving His purposes essentially because it expresses the fundamental filial relationship without which man cannot understand these purposes , and God cannot even reveal them to him. Hence, Luther is compelled to reject the intercession (as practised in Romanism) the sole purpose of which is to 'win a favour'.

As is the case with petition , there are certainly statements in Luther which might suggest that he himself was not altogether free from the criticism of 'primitivism'. But the spirit as well as the letter of such statements as the following must be interpreted : "Who is able to comprehend the pre-eminence of true Christian dignity ? . . which , . . through her priestly glory is able to work all things in the sight of God, because God doth bring to pass the things for which he doth pray and wish , as it is written : 'He shall work the will of them that fear Him , and shall hear their petitions (for self and others) and shall save them'". ('Lib. of a Chris. Man'. p. 32.)

However, in Luther's view, God does not 'save them' as a direct result of their wielding this 'magical instrument called intercession'; but as a result of the faith in Him which expresses itself in the form of absolute dependence. Intercession - the particularising of requests for others - has its chief theological significance in the eliciting and confirming of man's conscious dependence upon God, the acknowledgement of which must always be the condition upon which any particular blessing is received.

This conscious dependence upon God being the essential feature of intercession, it follows that Luther cannot regard the latter as influencing those prayed for 'directly', but 'by way of heaven'. The intercessor's relationship with the Hearer of Prayer is primary; not his relationship with the prayed-for person (though this is not unimportant). Luther's view in this matter is identical with that of Thomas Aquinas - with whom he disagreed on several other matters. "He who prays for another in no way acts upon him for whom he prays; his acts are directed to God alone". (Summa. II.2. clxxxi. 3.)

Nothing must obscure the truth that Intercession is God-centred, not man-centred: not even the fervency of one's desire to see someone's need met. The above principle is implied frequently in Luther's scattered statements on his theology of prayer, e.g. in his comment that God's favourable reception of a prayer depends entirely upon the measure of faith within the context of which the particular requests are made. "We cannot expel demons with certain ceremonies and words" - i.e. endeavouring to influence the needy person 'directly'; . . . "All we can do is in the name of Christ to pray the Lord God, of His infinite mercy, to deliver the possessed persons. And, if our prayer is offered up in full faith, we are assured by Christ Himself that it will be efficacious . . ." - i.e. influencing the person concerned 'by way of heaven'. (Table Talk. p.267.)

This is another way of stating that the problem of God's answer to such prayers of intercession can be resolved only in the recognition of the Church's dependence upon her Head, and that 'to glorify God' is the criterion for intercession, as it is for all other types of prayer. However Luther's practice may seem to belie the fact, this was the ultimate criterion and the ultimate 'discipline' of his own prayers. The pattern of the majority of them follows that of his intercession for Myconius, for whose recovery he prays, saying "This shall be my petition; this is my desire (that he shall recover); and my will shall be done. Amen. For my will seeks the honour of the divine name, and not my own honour and pleasure". ('Letters of M.L.' p. 224.) In fact, his intercessions for temporal benefits are always offered within the context of his realisation that, if granted, it is only so that they might serve the larger purpose of divine providence.

This fact is finely confirmed by Luther's feeling that both our own petitions and our intercessions for others can best be summed up in the supplication for the coming of the Kingdom of God, which, as we have already noted in chapter 8, is "the central subject of prayer in prophetic ideal religion". (Heiler. 'Prayer'. p. 296.) (c.f. also: Manual of the Bk. of Ps. p. 265.) An appreciation of the Kingdom of God as the basic

'necessity of the saints' is ultimately the primary discipline of all prayer. "Every prayer", Luther says, "is long enough if it be fervent, and proceed from a heart that understandeth the necessity of the saints". (Man. of the Bk. of Ps. - Psalm 123.) It can hardly be doubted that, for Luther, this properly motivated intercession was indeed "an unwearied work of education in true prayer". (F. Heiler: 'Prayer'. p.297.)

(d) Conclusion.

There is one further way in which Luther regarded intercession - namely, both as the rightful climax of preaching the Word, and (from the human standpoint) the justification of that preaching. "We come together", he says, "preach and hear God's Word, and bear before God our own and others' general and particular needs. ." (Richard and Painter: op.cit. p. 203.) Luther did not merely 'understand the necessity of the saints'; he himself, after the manner of the true prophet, felt and bore that necessity. It was no accident that the man who was fervent in preaching was also fervent in intercession. Nowhere, indeed, does he reveal the intensely prophetic nature of his religion than in this intimate connection between preaching and intercession.

Luther himself has clearly testified to this inward compulsion which he felt with regard to intercession. "I am bound to pour out before God my faith, and my righteousness, to cover and entreat for the sins of my neighbour, the burden of whose sins I must in my own person sustain, and so travail and be afflicted in them, as if they were my own sins; for on this wise was Christ afflicted for our sakes". ('Lib. of a Chris. Man'. p. 73.) Luther fully recognised that any moral rights we might have over men (including the right to preach to them) depended, to a large extent, on our intercession on their behalf.

Hence, it is not surprising to find that Luther regarded intercession as the most fully personal of all types of prayer, and the one in which Christian love was most adequately expressed. In this sense it was the basis of all prayer, and it secured for other types of the maximum reality and efficiency. Petition, for instance, is 'vain' without intercession. "If we would pray as we ought to do, we must first and principally commend unto God the common state of the Church. For he that seeketh his own welfare and neglecteth the state and prosperity of the Church doth not only show himself to be void of all sense and seal of true piety, but also the prayers which he maketh for himself are vain, and profit him nothing". (Comm. on Ps. of D. p.66.) The prayer of the individual is most meaningful and efficacious within the recognition of himself as a member of the 'Body of Christ'.

The statement has been made that "It would not be unfair to estimate a man's religion by the earnestness with which he longs for the welfare of others". ('Christ. Doc. of Prayer'. p. 112.) By this standard, few men's religion strikes a higher and nobler note than that of Martin Luther.

(2) PRAYER FOR THE DEAD.

It can be said, by way of anticipation, that no subject in Luther's theology of prayer provides more material for his critics than his view of prayer for the dead. There are clear contradictions which even the subtlest apologia cannot reconcile. The essential point, however, is that we are under no obligation to reconcile them; for they represent two distinct strands of his theological thought. The one represents an advance (theologically as well as chronologically) upon the other; the one shows an immature, and the other a mature, Luther. As the latter cannot be fully appreciated and understood without a knowledge of the former, our immediate task will be to examine Luther's earlier ideas on prayer for the dead.

(a) Luther's Earlier Doctrine.

There can be no doubt that, in his earlier years, Luther had no scruples whatever about praying for the dead. He himself records how much he looked forward, as a young priest, to 'help' his father in this way. "It was actually a grief to me that my mother and father still lived, so gladly would I have delivered them from purgatory through good works, masses, and prayers". ('Letters of M.L.' p.245.) Part of his commission when ordained priest in 1507 was, as Richard and Painter, observe: "Receive power to offer sacrifice for the living and the dead". ('Chris. Worship'. p. 141.)

It is true that prayer for the dead does not necessarily depend upon a doctrine of purgatory, but there is no refuting the fact that Luther's acceptance of such prayer was intimately linked with his acceptance of such a doctrine. In his Short Exposition of the Lord's Prayer, he prays "Have mercy on all poor souls in purgatory, especially So-and-So, and So-and-So; forgive them and us all our debts; comfort them and receive them in Thy mercy". (B.L.Woolf's trans. op.cit. p. 96.)

Again, in his 'Sermon on Indulgence and Grace' (1517), a belief in purgatory is taken for granted, though, significantly enough, Luther now rejects indulgences as a means of delivering souls in purgatory, and regards prayer as the best means of effecting this deliverance. "Whether souls are delivered from purgatory by indulgences, I do not know; nor do I believe it . . . Wherefore, for the sake of greater certainty, it were much better for you to pray and labour for those souls yourself: this course is more worthy, and is safe". (ibid. p. 54.) Though his power of discrimination is developing, there is no question but that he still accepts the doctrine of purgatory.

One writer, indeed, has brought the interesting reminder that Luther actually insisted, in face of criticism which alleged that he did not believe in the doctrine, that he "believes in purgatory, and in the duty of seeking by prayer . . . to relieve those suffering in the intermediate state". (J.Mackinnon: op.cit. Vol.2. p. 117.) It is obvious, however, that Luther's critique of a doctrine of 'meritorious prayer for the dead' is not far away (i.e. just prior to the Leipzig Disputation), since then he did not believe that "we may or can arbitrarily influence God's jurisdiction over souls in purgatory by such an artificial expedient as

the purchase of an indulgence on their behalf". (ibid.)

This progressive nature of Luther's attitude to prayer for the dead has often been unwittingly, or wittingly, disregarded by evaluators. The writer of the Article on that subject in the 'Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics', for instance (Bishop A.J. Maclean), claims that "Luther favoured the practice of prayer for the departed". This judgment is possible only by one who selects the 'suitable' references (e.g. "Both the living and the dead saints require of us that we should be a help to them in praying unto God that He would hasten their redemption". - Sel.Wks. Vol.1. p. 563.) But no impartial observer can so judge if the doctrine of the mature Luther is fully examined. This doctrine will be the principal concern of this chapter, after the following brief survey of the factors which led to its adoption.

(b) The Transition.

Of the several factors which led to Luther's change of viewpoint (contemporary abuses, the inner feelings of many devout men, the implications of his theology of justification, the evidence of the Scriptures, etc.) there can be little doubt but that contemporary abuse was the most powerful. "Luther began as a reformer of abuses", Dr. Mackinnon confirms, "the removal of which would have gone far to keep him, with his conservative tendency . . . within the Church (of Rome)". (op.cit. Vol.2. p. 339.)

As has been pointed out, Prayer for the Dead does not necessarily depend upon a doctrine of purgatory, though in practice it does. It is likewise true that the custom of prayer for the dead is itself earlier than the development of any doctrine of purgatory, and that, even in comparatively late times, the form of prayer for the dead was framed before the teaching was stereotyped (c.f. 'Encycl. of Rel. & Ethics'. p.209f.) However, there is no doubt but that the abuses of Luther's day in Germany arose from the specific encouragement, teaching, and claims of the Church. Luther even found the Church encouraging the belief that the sins of the dead would be forgiven as a result of prayer - aided by a monetary contribution to the Papal Exchequer.

Luther, in fact, was never content merely to assess the right and wrong of a particular doctrine (though that was far from unimportant) he was concerned also to stress the patent religious effects of each doctrine, and, if these were clearly unhealthy, to re-examine the doctrine in question with a frank bias in its disfavour. In this case, having decided on religious grounds that prayer for the dead is a morally dangerous practice, he is not far away from his later conviction that such prayer is inadmissible on doctrinal (i.e. biblical) grounds.

But, be it repeated, the original motive-power of his 'critique' of prayer for the dead is religious rather than theological (where these can be separated at all). Luther's concern was always predominantly religious and practical. Hence, as has been pointed out, he "dreaded the magic and superstition of the mass (as popularly conceived) far less than he feared any possible weakening of the human desire to become a 'partaker in the divine nature'". (A.Gardner. op.cit. p. 103.) And quite early in his life Luther saw that this weakening had taken place. Men had

become more interested in being workers for the divine favour, than 'partakers in the divine nature'. And it was precisely that which led to the abuses in connection with prayers and masses for the dead - practices which Luther might never have criticised had the abuses not been so prevalent and so repulsive.

The transition to his mature attitude was in no small measure helped also by the fact that there was, in the hearts of the common people a point of contact for the expression of his own (as yet) inarticulate feelings. It is certainly wrong to imagine that Luther developed his new attitude 'all by himself in a corner'. "There were a good many devout persons, before or during the Reformation, who had no scruple against praying for the departed, but who objected to the custom of paying other people to keep up a perpetual prayer on their behalf". (A. Gardner. op.cit. p. 103.) Here again the main problem arises through the manifest abuse of a practice which few people considered evil in itself. Only through accepting the challenge of the abuse, was the error of the practice itself unfolded.

This must not be taken to mean that a considered study of the implications of his developing theology, or his study of the Bible, did not contribute to his change of viewpoint. As has been pointed out: "Luther's conception of justification by grace was bound to raise the whole issue of . . . masses for the dead . . . and of the position of the priest as mediator offering sacrifices to God". (H.H. Kramm. 'The Theol. of M.L.' p. 27.) But one can at least wonder whether the break with Rome would have been so final and so uncompromising if the practical religious motivation (the result of recognising an obvious abuse) had been absent, or less compelling.

(c) LUTHER'S LATER DOCTRINE.

It is commonly imagined that, until Luther's protest, the practice of prayers and masses for the dead had never been questioned. This is emphatically not the case. As early as the 4th century, the same protest had been made by Aetius, who declared that "the eucharist ought not to be offered for them that sleep". ('Encycl. of Rel. & Ethics'. - Art. already quoted.)

No one, however, had produced such a strong case against prayer for the dead as Luther did in the 16th century. His own argument begins with a forthright rejection of the traditional doctrine of purgatory. "As for purgatory, no place in Scripture makes mention thereof; neither must we in any way allow it; for it undervalues the grace, benefits, and merits of our blessed sweet Saviour Christ Jesus". (Table Talk. p. 226.) Here, as elsewhere, the two-fold basis of his assertion is clearly defined; on the one hand, the doctrinal and Scriptural authority, and on the other hand, the practical religious expediency.

In his 'Sermon concerning the Rich Man and Lazarus', Luther raises the question "whether or not prayers ought to be made for the dead, seeing that there is no mention made in the Gospel of any middle state between Abraham's bosom and hell". (Sel. Works. Vol.1. p. 441.) His conclusion seems to favour the rejection of these prayers on the logical

grounds that "those who are received into Abraham's bosom do not want these prayers, and those who are cast down into hell can be aided by no prayers at all". (ibid.) Consequently he proceeds to formulate the general (and somewhat cautious) principle that "There is no precept whatever to be found in the Holy Scriptures that enjoins intercession for the dead. Wherefore he will commit no sin who shall neglect to offer any interceding prayers for those who are departed out of this life". (ibid.) This is far from an unconditional condemnation of the practice; and, indeed, such unconditional condemnation is not to be found in Luther.

His conservatism is thrown into relief when we compare his undogmatic approach to the practice of prayer for the dead with the attitude expressed in other Confessions of Faith. The Westminster Confession, for example, takes a much more precise and dogmatic line. "Prayer is to be made for things lawful and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter; but not for the dead". (xxi. 4.) The reason for such a prohibition is seen in the teaching of the Confession as to the state of the faithful after death. This declares that the soul, after death, can in no wise progress. (xxii. 1.) Again: the Shorter Catechism offers the dogmatic assertion, "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory". (Question 37).

We find no such dogmatism in Luther. "As God has hidden from us the state of such souls", he suggests, "and we are compelled to remain entirely in uncertainty how He deals with such, we would not, nay cannot declare, that those do wickedly who pray for such souls; and that more especially since we are sure from the gospel that many were raised from the dead who, notwithstanding (as we must confess), had not heard the last sentence pronounced upon them. And hence, we must remain in uncertainty about any other, whether or not God has finally pronounced His sentence concerning either his salvation or damnation". (Sel. Works. Vol. 1. p. 441.)

The supPLICATOR'S approach to God, in other words, must be 'conditional'. Luther certainly declares that "the bounds of purgatory extend not beyond this world; for here in this life the upright, good, and godly Christians are well and soundly scourged and purged". (Table Talk. p. 226.); nevertheless, he does not absolutely condemn prayer for the dead because he admits the possibility that God might be able and willing to help those who have not been so 'scoured and purged'. "For the dead, since Scripture mentions nothing concerning them, I do not regard it as a sin to pray thus, or the like: 'O God, if Thou hast such relations with ~~xxx~~ souls that Thou canst help them, be gracious unto them'; and if this occur once or twice, let that be enough". (Erl. 30. 370.)

Indeed, ultimately, Luther's main criticism is directed against those for whom 'once or twice' is not enough. He rejects the human presumption which lies behind the endless repetition of such prayers (and masses); and he deplures the lack of personal faith in God which these prayers show. Rightly or wrongly, he regarded them as betraying what amounts to a lack of confidence in the Love and Justice of God. He is quite convinced that "To appoint liturgies, vigils, and forms of prayer to be repeated annually for the benefit of the dead, and to reiterate as

every year returns a whole round of mutterings and bawlings, as though God had not heard the prayers of the year before, is all an imposture of the devil, and death itself. For by that our incredulity, God is mocked, and all those forms of prayer are mere blasphemies". (Sel. Works. Vol. 1. p. 442.)

This still does not constitute an unconditional rejection of Prayer for the Dead. The abuse of the practice remains the principle butt of Luther's criticism. This is made even more plain in his 'Appeal to the Ruling Class', where the practical consideration of expediency weighs as heavily as the consideration of the intrinsic rights and wrongs of prayer for the dead. "It is always a Christian act to abolish or reduce everything which we see abused", Luther advises, "and which provokes God rather than reconciles Him. It would seem to be far preferable, and surely more pleasing to God, as well as better in itself, that a Chapter, a Church, or a cloister should combine all their annual masses and vigils into a single celebration. On an appointed day let them hold a real vigil and mass, in earnestness of heart, in devotion and faith, on behalf of all their benefactors". (B.L. Woolf's trans. op. cit. Vol. 1. p. 164.)

Exactly the same reserve is seen in Luther's habit of qualifying a statement which, on second thoughts, he feels may be somewhat too categorical. "It were right to abolish . . . masses for the dead", he says in one breath; and then in the next, "or at least to diminish their number, for we evidently see that they have become no better than mockery. . . How should it please God to hear the poor vigils and masses mumbled in this wretched way, neither read nor prayed? Even when they are properly read it is not done for the love of God, but for the love of money and as payment of a debt. Now it is impossible that anything should please God, or win anything from Him, that is not done freely, out of love for Him". ('Add. to the Nob.' p. 63.)

Even allowing for overstatement and undue harshness of terminology (and this allowance ought to be made), we can hardly doubt that such abuses did exist, and that they were largely responsible for the depersonalising of the religious relationship between God and man - a relationship which alone gave meaning and reality to any form of prayer.

Yet another argument against such abuses is marshalled by Luther in his Ninety-five Theses. "Why do funeral masses and anniversary masses for the deceased continue, and why does the Pope not return, or permit the withdrawal of the funds bequeathed for this purpose, since it is wrong to pray for those who are already redeemed?" (No. 83.) Not only so; it is wrong, Luther thinks, to pray 'meritoriously' for either the redeemed or the unredeemed, since "the penitential canons apply only to men who are still alive, and according to the canons themselves, none applies to the dead". (No. 8.) In fact, Luther clearly sees that abuse can flourish only in an atmosphere of inaccurate doctrine. Prayer for the dead will inevitably flourish in a community which believes that papal regulations, for instance, do not cease to apply at death. Luther therefore insists that "It is a wrongful act, due to ignorance, when priests retain the canonical penalties on the dead in purgatory". (No. 10.) "Death puts an end to all the claims of the Church". (No. 13.)

Popular piety, however, had been so conditioned by the Church's insistence that death did not put an end to her claims, that this fear-motivated intercession persisted - the burden of which was that the sins of the deceased should be remitted. No finer refutation of the doctrinal error which lay behind such an attitude is to be found in Reformation literature than this pungent passage from one of Luther's letters. "Oh, people must pray otherwise if they wish anything from God. God ridicules such vigils - primarily because God did not institute the mass for the dead, but as a sacrament for the living; and it is a dreadful thing for a man to presume, without God's permission, to turn a sacrament for the living into a sacrifice for the dead. Beware of becoming a partner in this terrible error, which the priests and monks have instituted for the sake of their bellies. For a Christian must do nothing that God has not commanded, and there is no command as to such masses and vigils, but it is solely their own invention, which brings in money, without helping either the living or dead". ('Letters of M.L.' - Letter to Bartime von Sternberg.)

It is characteristic of Luther's humility in his approach to the Hearer of Prayer that, in contrast with Romanist presumption, he can admit freely that we could promote the good of dead souls by fervent prayer of faith, and by serious supplications, "if there can be any good done unto them by us in this way". (Sel. Works. Vol.1. p. 442.) But he cannot find justifiable grounds for such certainty. But even in this uncertainty Luther sees the hand of God; indeed, this uncertainty has been specifically ordained by God. "Be thou, therefore, cautious and prudent, especially since God will not have us to know what is the state of the dead so that there may be a ground for faith in the Word of God, whereby we are assured that God, at the end of this . . . life, will save those who die in faith, and will consign those who believe not to the family of hell". (ibid. p. 443.)

Luther will not tolerate any suggestion of 'utilitarianism' in religion. The faith which man is invited to have is faith exclusively in God, not in any instrument whereby God might be reached, or in an instrument whereby benefits might be secured for dead souls. Just as he rejects the 'intercession of the saints' because that doctrine resulted in a deterioration in the direct relationship between God's Word and man's faith, so now he can reject also the doctrine of 'intercession for the dead' (i.e. complete certainty in the efficacy of such intercession) because it similarly affects for worse the same essential religious relationship. His own 'conditional' prayer for the dead is, in fact, the natural outcome of his unconditional trust in God. "When you have prayed once or twice, you should believe that your prayer is answered, and there let it rest, lest you tempt God and mistrust Him". (Lenker ed. Vol.13. No.29 - 'Sermons 1st Sun after Trinity'.)

On the face of it, this principle of praying 'once or twice' might appear a contradiction of Luther's important principle of 'importunity' in prayer, which has been noted in connection with both petition and intercession (for the living). But this is not so. It is precisely because such importunity is included in the conditions upon which God can

grant men's requests , and included in the 'factors' through which He is pleased to realise His will in the midst of men , that it is essential in the sphere of prayer for the living. This , however , is not true in the sphere of prayer for the dead.

Luther's principle is clear-cut : in prayer for the living , 'importunity' is certainly an evidence of faith in God ; in prayer for the dead , on the contrary , it is an evidence of unbelief. "I would beg of you" , Luther writes to a correspondent , "to cease from masses , vigils , and daily prayers for her soul. It is sufficient if your Excellency pray once or twice for her , for we are told that , if we believe , we shall receive what we pray for. Otherwise , if we always ask for one thing , it is a sign we do not believe God , and thus anger Him more through unbelieving prayer." (Letters of M.L. - to Bartime von Sternberg.)

His principle of 'conditional' prayer , in a word , is based upon the same motive which characterises every type of prayer : the primary religious motive of 'giving glory to God'. His attitude has been truly and succinctly put thus - and this must be our conclusion from the foregoing discussion : "While condemning all attempts of the living to influence the fate of the dead by masses , good works , and prayers , he yet permits a short prayer of intercession , recommending them to the grace of God". (H.H.Krahn. op.cit. p. 104.

CONCLUSION.

There has been no attempt in the foregoing study to minimise Luther's contribution to theological thought in general ; yet this is not his principal contribution to Protestantism. "Luther's significance for Christian theology lies in the fact that he gave an insight into the Gospel which constantly verifies itself in the experience of believers. This fundamental religious interpretation must be regarded as the centre of all his thinking". (E.M. Carlsen : op.cit. p. 38.)

It is hardly an exaggeration to claim that the theological pre-suppositions of prayer discussed in chapter I are all essentially corollaries of the fact that prayer takes its rise when the Word becomes flesh in the individual soul. The basis of Luther's religion is not a set of profound doctrines (though his doctrines are indeed profound) , but the intense reality of a religious relationship between God and man - a relationship , moreover , in which man freely acknowledges God as the sole Initiator of fellowship. Luther's theology centres round his tireless assertion of the necessity of a genuinely theocentric religion. This is true for his theology of prayer as for all other aspects of his thought. "It is God's first considering us , and having respect unto us by His grace , that causes us to pray that He would have respect unto us and hear us". (Sel. Works. Vol.4. p. 36f.)

In no theologian of Reformation or modern times do we find any greater insistence upon the necessity of a strong objective foundation for prayer than in Luther. This is precisely because Luther , in marked contrast with contemporary Romanism , regarded the "problem of prayer as part of the much larger theological problem of the doctrine of God". (R.H. Coates : op.cit. p. 40.) A semi-Pelagian approach to prayer (as seen in Roman Catholicism) is possible only in an atmosphere of 'vagueness' or ignorance as to the true nature of the Deity. It is indeed one of the ironies of history that , while rejecting "almost the whole paraphernalia of mediaeval piety" , Luther is nevertheless "inclined to retain what is good and serviceable in mediaeval devotion ; so much so that his more radical opponents regarded him as . . . a traitor to his own principle". (J. Mackinnen : op.cit. Vol. 4. p. 256f.)

Luther's conservatism has no doubt been regarded as a weakness ; but this is a shallow judgement. His refusal to reject everything in Romanist theology must never blind us to the importance of his partial rejection ; for , in the latter lies the basis of all subsequent Reformation thought. Nothing , in any event , can obscure the fact that Luther's chief significance is that he "completely broke with the idea that religious experience is composed of historic and sacramental acts which God performs and holds in readiness ; and of subjective acts which somehow are an affair of man's". (A. Harnack: op.cit. Vol.VII. p. 202.)

In opposition to the practice (if not the official theology) of Rome , Luther emphasised that faith was indispensable for receiving the grace of God - whether in prayer or in sacrament ; and that , without this faith , there can be no 'benefit' from either (c.f. Sel. Works.

Vol.3. p. 339.) Prayer, indeed, is nothing but "the highest exercise of faith". (Man. of Bk. of Psalms. p. 224.)

This 'exercise', moreover, is possible only between God and redeemed man. Not only so; prayer comes about not at the level of man's holiness (the view of Rome), but at the level of man's unworthiness. This is but a restatement of his doctrine of 'justification' - a doctrine which is concerned to emphasise a comparatively simple religious truth: that communion with God (prayer) does not take its rise in anything that man initiates. 'Justification' is the essential basis of a true prayer-experience. Man's faith in God as the Hearer of Prayer and Giver of Grace 'creates' the conditions within which a prayer-relationship is possible. This is still the distinctive emphasis of modern Protestantism; and it can hardly be denied that, without Luther, it might not have been quite so distinctive.

"As evangelical Christians", one writer declares, "we are not bound to the Reformation, still less to the 'entire Luther' . . . but we do not depart from the plain testimony of history when we rediscover in the Christianity of Luther . . . that to which Protestantism has at the present day, in weakness and under restriction, developed itself, and when we hold that Luther's conception of faith is still today the moving spirit of Protestantism". (A. Harnack: op.cit. Vol. VII. p.32.)

In particular, the necessity for that faith to be exclusively Christo-centric was strenuously maintained by Luther. This, in turn, involved an outright rejection of prayer to the saints, which (as we have seen) Luther regarded as one of the principal abuses of mediaeval Romanism. "There is no way to be sought by invocation of saints or any other kind of worship or works, but by Christ and in Christ alone". (Comm. on Ps. of Deg. p. 198.) Luther certainly is the chief of those "Reformers who swept away every contemplation of intercessors who were supposed to share with our Lord the procuring of pardon and salvation". (T.M. Lindsay: op.cit. Vol.1. p. 476.) And his influence upon subsequent Confessions of the Reformation period can hardly be over-estimated (c.f. 'Augsburg Confession': "The Scripture teacheth not to invoke saints, nor to ask the help of saints, because it propoundeth to us one Christ, the Mediator, High Priest, and Intercessor". - Art. xxi.)

In fact, the whole content of the word 'Christ' (as of the words 'God', 'faith', etc.) was essentially something different for Luther than for contemporary Romanism. Thus, while we must realise that Luther "had no quarrel with the great Christological and Trinitarian formulations of the traditional Creeds" (to which Romanism subscribed), we must also realise that "it would be idle to assert that the significance of Christ was precisely the same for Luther as it was for his contemporary opponents". (P. Watson: op.cit. p. 6.) To claim that Luther's 'Protestantism' is simply a new solution to the problems of mediaeval Catholicism (on the grounds that the same concepts are to be found in Catholicism as in Luther) is to betray a little naivety. As one writer has pointed out: though we find both in Luther and in Roman-

ism the same concept, we find it "with a totally different content. It is difficult to see how anyone can see in this only a transformation of the mediaeval idea". (H. Boehmer: 'Luther', p. 271.)

This error (and many another) can arise only as a result of failure to realise that Luther's theology, i.e. his thought and speech about God, cannot be divorced from his religion, i.e. his experience of God, in Christ. "I see that Luther's decisive importance easily becomes lost to view", Harnack declares, "when an effort is made to describe all his 'doctrines'". (op.cit. p. 168 n.) Behind all these doctrines and constituting the material for them, stands his intensely personal apprehension of a 'gracious God'. This apprehension is the truly significant element in Luther's contribution to Protestantism. It has been claimed that Luther's "ideas cannot be investigated systematically because they are not systematic. They can be understood only in relation to Luther's religious experience". (E.M. Carlson: op.cit. p. 43 - quoting T. Bohlin.) This judgement is certainly the true one.

In this, Luther is distinguished from Calvin, whose ideas, for the most part, can be investigated systematically - and without a great deal of reference to his religious experience. It is no coincidence that the greater 'systematic theologian' (Calvin) should have had the smaller influence upon personal piety, and that Luther's contribution to the history of prayer is appreciably greater than that of Calvin. To say that Luther adhered to a prayer-centred, 'spiritual' theology more than Calvin is not to minimise the latter's achievement; yet it cannot be denied that, had Calvin's theological interest been less 'systematic' and more 'spiritual', less 'legal' and more 'religious', his influence would have been even greater than it undoubtedly is today in the realm of piety; and his impact upon the Reformation more enduring.

Not unjustly has it been claimed for Luther that, "with his usual insight, (he) saw that the overthrow of the ecclesiastical jurisprudence of the Middle Ages was a prime necessity if the Augustinian doctrine of grace was ever to receive its old place in the life of the Church, and the claims of the Papacy be overthrown. When he cast the 'Decretals' into the flames before the doctors and populace of Wittenberg, Luther claimed more than his civil freedom; he asserted the need for a spiritual theology emancipated from the categories of the Law. In his failure to see this great blot upon Mediaeval theology we find the chief weakness of Calvin". (H.B. Workman: 'Christian Thought to the Ref.' p.165) In Luther certainly, more clearly and more categorically than in any other of the Reformers, we find that in 'dealing with God', man is involved in a relationship in which the elements of decision and committal determine its very nature and quality.

Luther does not deny the legitimacy of speaking of an 'idea of God', or even of an 'experience of God'; but he will not tolerate such terms if they contain even the least suggestion that the essential feature of man's relationship with God is not that of 'personal meeting'. A truly Christian theology, in fact, is based on the personal realisation

ion of the primacy of the Father-child relationship ; which means , as far as Luther is concerned , that a conception of God as 'wholly other' (the seeds of which are at least present in Calvinism) is little better than a conception of Him in more or less crude 'anthropomorphic' terms (the seeds of which were certainly present in mediaeval Romanism).

Be it repeated that there is no attempt here to minimise the tremendous importance for Protestant theology of John Calvin ; there is , however , little doubt that Luther broke away much more successfully and much more unreservedly than Calvin from the legalistic conception of God which dominated pre-Reformation theology. Luther's 'protest' is a thing of the heart as much as the mind ; so much so , that the whole inner history of the Reformation is embodied in the record of his spiritual experience and growth of religious convictions more vividly than in any other of the Reformers.

As has been carefully noted : "We can easily go astray if we stretch the utterances of the Reformers to fit any ready-made pattern , whether of Protestant or Tridentine orthodoxy. Ritschl correctly pointed out that they did not begin with the formal categories of systematic theology. If they penetrated with force into the Biblical world , and even with uncanny accuracy into the Biblical vocabulary , it is because Luther , like Paul , found his theology in the historical context of an acute crisis". (E.G. Rupp: 'Eng. Prot. Tradition'. p.156f.) The key to Luther's theology of God and man is his intense apprehension of the reality of the divine-human encounter.

The same experimental basis can be located for all other aspects of his theology ; and it is precisely this basis which makes Luther's theology so 'satisfying' , compared with that of those theologians (such as Schleiermacher) who knew little of Luther's religious and moral struggle , and for whom the problem of guilt , in particular , was virtually non-existent. Luther was not primarily a 'Protestant' , but - as he preferred to describe himself - an 'Evangelical' ; and , ultimately , what led him to 'protest' against the religion and theology of his time was his evangelical conviction.

A modern writer gives the strongest support to this interpretation of Luther's essential significance for religion. "Primarily he was not a reformer of constitutions , rituals , and organisations. Primarily he was a man preaching the main religious experience of his life ; man is saved , is justified in the eyes of God by grace alone through faith". (H.H. Kramm: op.cit. p. 25.) Only gradually does Luther become aware of the practical consequences of such an evangelical experience. But it cannot be too strongly insisted that Luther's motive in his reforming work was not a 'Puritan' , anti-ceremonial spirit. It springs from his utter disagreement with the conception of the religious relationship to be found in Catholicism.

This , no less , is the ground of his opposition to some of the other 'protestant' movements of the contemporary scene. His opposition to the Anabaptists , the Fanatics (Schwärmer) , the Zwinglians , for instance , does not arise out of 'petty jealousy' , but out of his refusal

to accept the more or less imperfect idea of the essential nature of the religious relationship, which each (in his opinion) holds. God is not primarily a Judge, nor 'Absolute Rationality', nor the 'Impassive Spirit'; but the 'Hearer of Prayer'. Speaking with God is the indispensable basis of speaking about God. Luther's forthright rejection of the moralistic piety of catholicism, the rational theology of Scholasticism, and the ecstatic religiosity of Mysticism is grounded in the fact that none of these 'movements', in practice, accepts this basis.

This astonishing stress upon personal, Christian 'experience', and an equally firm repudiation of 'dogmatic Christianity', must not however be taken to imply that Luther minimised the importance of the intellectual element in religion. It merely demonstrates the shift of interest from 'dogmatic' to 'dynamic' Christianity. Luther, indeed, is distinguished from most of the other Reformers precisely by the fact that he directed his attacks against false doctrine as often as against unhealthy practice. (c.f. 'Tischreden', 26. nr.35; also, 'Comm. on Gal.' p. 453, 456.)

"Nothing is more incorrect", Harnack declares, "than the widely prevalent opinion that the cancelling of dogmatic Christianity by Luther was equivalent to a neutralising of all 'faith that is believed' ('fides quae creditur'); all that is required is simply pious feeling. A more foolish misunderstanding of Luther's Reformation cannot be conceived of; for precisely the opposite is rather true of it; it only restored its sovereign right to faith, and thereby to the doctrine of faith - in the sense of its being nothing but the doctrine of Christ - after the uncertainties of the Middle Ages, which had reached their highest point at the beginning of the 16th century; and to the horror of all Humanists, Churchmen, Franciscans and Illuminists, set up theology, i.e. the true theology of the Cross ('theologia crucis') as the decisive power in the Church". (op.cit. p.229.)

Luther's theology is the result not of trying to 'search out the nature of God' or of the 'speculative attempt to reach God in His naked transcendence' (i.e. 'theologia gloriae'), but of discovering this God as He is revealed in His Humiliation, in Christ. His theology certainly is not based upon 'feeling'. The indispensable 'speaking with God' is always a speaking 'through Christ'. In a word: Luther's theology is wholly Christology.

It is this noteworthy fact which allows us to refute a further error concerning Luther - the error of regarding his theology as little else than a formulation of disconnected ideas. Certainly his theology is 'unsystematic'; yet, the task of showing the essential unity of his theological thought has, in fact, been deliberately attempted in the foregoing study, with his doctrine of Christ-mediated Prayer as centre and point of departure. We have proceeded on the assumption that Luther is "never concerned merely with particular points of doctrine in isolation from each other or from the Christian faith as a whole" - but, as Luther himself clearly said, that 'no one article of faith is believed without all the other articles'. (P. Watson: op.cit. p. 5.) His doctrines of the Word (chap. II.), of the Holy Spirit (chap. III.), of the Sacraments (chap. IV.), and of the Church (chap. V.) have been shown to have

the most intimate relation to his doctrine of prayer - a task which could be attempted at all only because, for Luther, 'Christ fills the whole sphere of God'.

In fact, the unity which we have found in Luther is 'dynamic' rather than 'dogmatic'; 'empirical' rather than 'theoretical'; Christological rather than philosophical. But it is none the less real. Quoting the opinion of Bring, one writer declares: "Luther is not a dogmatist in the sense that he offers a dogmatic system, but in a deeper sense 'hardly any religious thinker has had such a unified view as Luther'". (E.M. Carlsen: op.cit. p. 141.) His doctrine of Prayer, no more and no less than any other of his doctrines, is the record of his inward experience of a 'gracious God'. It illustrates (as do the related doctrines treated in Part II) the truth asserted at the commencement of this study, that "for Luther, every question must be examined in the light of its relevance to the one ultimate issue of the religious relationship". (P. Watson: op.cit. p. 26.)

That this standard for theology still widely applies to 20th century Protestantism is, in larger measure than we may realise, due to the influence of this greatest and most dynamic figure of Reformed Evangelicalism - Martin Luther.

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